Leading Meditations of the Spiritual Exercises

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CHARLES F. BLOUNT S.J.

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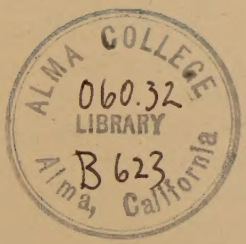
BY

CHARLES F. BLOUNT, S.J.



LONDON
BURNS OATES & WASHBOURNE LTD.
PUBLISHERS TO THE HOLY SEE

6440

First published, 1928

IMPRIMI POTEST SI IIS AD QUOS
PERTINET VIDEBITUR :
HENRICUS KEANE, S.J.,
Praep. Prov. Angliae.

30 *Novembris*, 1927.

NIHIL OBSTAT :
EDUARDUS MAHONEY, S.T.D.,
Censor deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR :
EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
Vicarius generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 9a Februarii, 1928.

Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

In the book of *The Spiritual Exercises* certain meditations deserve especially to be called leading meditations, as leading up more directly to the Election, or to the resolutions, which ordinarily result from going through the Exercises. Others may be called *leading*, as being worked out in some detail to serve as models for others which are more briefly indicated. It is these meditations that are here developed, in the shape they have gradually taken in the mind of the writer, as the outcome of a good many attempts to propose them to various classes of exercitants.

They may be found useful to those who have followed the retreats given on these lines, or to others who make a private retreat, or to anyone who wishes to pursue in daily reflection and prayer the main path traced by St Ignatius in his famous book.

For any substantial profit to be derived from a little book like the present, account should be taken of St Ignatius' warning, that no point, or at least no number, be read, until the previous one has been seriously pondered and applied in prayer to the individual's own particular needs.

Perhaps the simplest scheme for meditation upon any subject is to be found in the two questions: *What is it?* and, *What is it to me?* The second should quickly lead to aspiration and converse with God, as well as to good resolutions.

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THE FOUNDATION, OR FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE, OF ASCETICISM

The only Prelude to be used in making the following thirteen meditations will be a prayer for light to see the truth—*e.g.*, the collect to the Holy Spirit: *Deus qui corda, etc., Domine, ut videam.*

I.—The Foundation (1)

1. *Man*—the one being on this earth who can turn in upon himself, and utter the word *I* ; who can reflect and reason and inquire, and call himself before himself, and judge himself; who can form real ideas, ideas of being, of cause, of purpose, of happiness, of justice, of right, of wrong, of time, of eternity; who can question himself about himself, and ask: why, whence, whither this being of mine? *Domine, ut videam* (Lord, that I may see).

2. *Man*—who, more important than all else, can know God, and know of God; who can be certain that there is a first, supreme, self-existing cause of all things, eternal, necessary, infinite; all wise, all powerful, all good; in whom all law, physical and moral, finds its basis; who cannot abdicate his sovereign dominion, or fail to uphold the moral law, which in its fundamental principles is unchangeable as himself.

3. *Man*—who has the awful prerogative of free choice, who can put before himself an end, and choose means for attaining it; who is not the creature of mere instinct, but is endowed with free will, and so can be justly blamed, commended, rewarded, punished.

II.—The Foundation (2)

1. Man has been *created*: each individual man. I myself have been drawn originally out of nothing, and therefore of myself I am nothing. My body—fashioned from the slime of the earth that was itself brought out of nothing; my soul—directly created as soon as the material part of me was ready to receive it. I can have no absolute rights of any sort. And, moreover, being nothing of myself, I am now at this instant what I am, only because of the creative power that is ever active.

2. And of course it is God who created, and in so true a sense is creating, holding me up out of the abyss of nothingness. How close this brings me to him! How entirely his! His handiwork, property, child. What is the part taken by an earthly parent in a child's production, compared to that of God! Something like the part of one who presses the knob in the production of the light.

3. Yes, if authorship implies ownership, then indeed there is no ownership comparable to that of God's ownership of me. He can claim all I can offer: he can dispose of me as he judges right. I can make no bargain, lay down no terms, having nothing to bargain with but what is already his through and through.

III.—The Foundation (3)

1. I ask myself what is God's purpose in creating me. A purpose he must have; and if I can know it, it is vital that I should make it *my* purpose also, wherever I can have a purpose. This I can only have so far as I have control over my actions—in other words, so far as I am free. Therefore the question of *God's* purpose only matters in regard to my free choices. What is the end to which God wishes my *free* actions to be directed?

2. St Ignatius' answer to this question is as follows: God's purpose is that you should direct your free actions to his *praise*. This answer is almost self-evident if only we form a right idea of praise. To praise another is to express in some way the good that I know of him. So then St Ignatius tells us that our free choices should be an expression of what we know about God.

3. Is not this really self-evident? If God is truly God, act as though he were, as though he were your Creator, your Father, your supreme benefactor, your only true good. If you do this, your free actions will be what God wants them to be. *Deus meus et omnia* (My God and my all). If he alone is all wise, all powerful, all perfect, act as if he were.

IV.—The Foundation (4)

1. Let us examine further the idea of *praise*. The highest praise we can give a doctor, for example, is by showing complete faith in him, by ordering our life according to his advice. So of God: our praise of him will consist in ordering our whole life according to his plan—using our reason to grasp it and our will to realise it. This makes the idea of praise simple and practical, bringing our will into perfect accord with his.

2. This shows too how we can never have too much, so to say, of the *end*. It is evident that whatever God's plan may be, we can never go too far in realising it. He can never ask anything of us which is impossible, unwise, indiscreet, imprudent, anything that is not the best for us, as well as most to his own glory. He is the most reasonable of all masters and owners.

3. Here then is the ideal: to praise God by bringing all our free actions more and more into conformity with his designs, and this for the best of all reasons, because he is good and right and perfect. This is to give him his right place in our lives. This is to make open profession that God is God, that he is our one and only good.

V.—The Foundation (5)

1. St Ignatius says that to praise, reverence, and serve God is to be the end of our free actions; but we may perhaps regard reverence and service as the negative and positive aspects of praise. We reverence God by saying *No*, when he wants us to say *No*; we serve him by saying *Yes* when he wants us to say *Yes*. Reverence is shown in great part by leaving things alone, service by employing them: in both ways we praise God.

2. What else matters? at the end of our life what will remain, what will be of any moment, except precisely our free acts? *Opera illorum sequuntur illos*. We take these with us into God's presence, and we take nothing else. Those are rubbish which have no praise of God in them, and those are our only treasure which have some degree, greater or less, of the praise of God. The latter represent the *use* I have made of life.

3. So it seems I am no *use*, no real use for anything but to praise God. God has made me able to know him, to adjust my will to his, to conform myself to him, to attach myself to him. If I am able to do this, and so far as I am able, nothing else, nothing less than this, can be his purpose in regard to me.

VI.—The Foundation (6)

1. By praising God, I save my soul, my very self. One meaning of this is, no doubt, that I keep myself safe from utter ruin and misery; for if, instead of praising God, I show my contempt for him by preferring my own will to his in some outrageous way, I expose myself to his everlasting wrath. Yes, I must remember that my free choices issue finally in eternal happiness or eternal woe.

2. But I may think of the salvation of my soul, the *salus animae*, as the *health* of my soul. My soul is in good or bad health according to my free actions. In proportion as I live for my end, I am spiritually well. A man may be very well in body, but very unwell in soul, and *vice versa*; and we all know without further proof that it is better for the body to be torn in pieces than to lose the good health of my soul.

3. By praising God I bring my soul finally to that state in which I shall be perfectly well and happy. This is the positive side of salvation. And that very perfection of my soul's estate and happiness will consist in the continual carrying out of that for which I am made—viz., in praising God, no longer with pain or difficulty, but sweetly and lovingly.

VII.—The Foundation (7)

1. The other things on the face of the earth have been created for man. No doubt primarily and directly, the other things are the other material objects around us: animals, plants, minerals; sun, moon, and stars; all the furniture of the dwelling which God built for man; the universe and its equipment. It seems evident enough that it is man to whom these things minister, to his life, convenience, occupation, education.

2. But it is surely reasonable to include under these "other things," as far as each individual is concerned, persons, situations, events, all forms of activity, his own faculties, senses, organs, so far as they may be distinguished from the *I*, which disposes of, uses, takes action in some way in regard to them. All these, so far as they enter into the life of any individual man, are *for* him, are intended to help him to pursue his end.

3. They give him opportunities of choice, of praising God. From this point of view how full of purpose they are, and how truly each is seen to be intended as a help, as an occasion of right action! How varied and beautiful is the hymn of praise which each is thus enabled to pour out to the honour and glory of God!

VIII.—The Foundation (8)

1. It is true the word *created* cannot be applied quite in the same sense to a situation or an event, as to some object of taste or sight or touch. But, on the other hand, every such situation or event is made up of God's creatures, and their disposition has been foreseen, arranged, or at least permitted by him; accepted by him as a part of my *entourage*, as a scene in the stage on which I am to play my part.

2. Is not this last a good illustration to make use of? God has composed a part for me to play: he has a right that I should endeavour to reproduce his *idea* in every scene, in every action, in every word. I am here to play the part he has composed; nothing is a matter of chance as far as he is concerned. He knows exactly how he wants me to deal with every other actor, every situation, event, opportunity of activity, and of the use of my manifold powers.

3. An actor gives praise to an author by studying and endeavouring to bring out his thought, his idea. If he distorts this idea of the author, he is sometimes said to murder him—to murder Shakespeare, for example. How often in this sense do we, as it were, murder God, spoiling the design and plan he had formed for our life!

IX.—The Foundation (9)

1. St Ignatius says that these "other things" that make up material for free action should be used so far as they help me to praise God, left alone so far as they interfere with this end. In other words, my life as a free agent consists in saying *Yes* and in saying *No* according to God's plan. But it must be carefully noted that saying *No*, or leaving things alone, is just as much a *use* of them for God's praise as saying *Yes*.

2. God is like a king who provides a household, and every kind of activity for the education of his son and heir. If I take my opportunities of use and of abstention, of activity and of restraint, of exercise and rest, I become fit for heaven, I save my soul. If instead of this I follow inclination, fancy, passion, I dishonour God, I spoil myself. I become a laughing-stock to God's enemies and mine.

3. How do men generally regard these "other things," persons, situations, events, their own faculties, senses, organs? As God's property? as intended for carrying out *his* plans? as means of their own perfection? for securing their own spiritual health? Do they see God in all, and all in God? and therefore all as sharing in his claim to praise, reverence, service?

X.—The Foundation (10)

1. If I am to use my power of free choice in regard to my *entourage* in accordance with God's plan, I shall need what St Ignatius calls "indifference"; which really means that I shall need to be able to say *Yes* or *No* with equal readiness, where things may either help or hinder me in praising God. Not merely do I need to be able to do this absolutely (the ability involved in being free), but to be able practically and unhesitatingly. Otherwise I shall be continually bungling my part.

2. What wonderful promptitude a musician requires in putting his finger down or lifting it off, if he is to play even an ordinary piece of music on piano or violin. If his finger does not answer readily to the word of command, there is nothing but false notes, discord, every kind of blunder. Compare my actual life with the tune Almighty God really meant me to play!

3. How does the musician acquire this wonderful control over the movements of his hand? By exercise. How am I to get this power of saying *Yes* or *No* just as God has arranged for me? Well, for the present, by exercise, by going through a course of exercises. The action of the will is guided by motive, and it is the object of the Exercises to supply motive for right choice.

XI.—The Foundation (11)

1. One way in which we make ourselves "indifferent" in the sense explained is, then, by prayer—by mental prayer; by using all our faculties in God's presence and in converse with God, to strengthen in our hearts those motives which will help us to make the right choice, as occasion requires. A lively horror of sin, for example, will enable us to make many difficult choices by which sin is rendered more and more remote a danger: the example of Christ will also help exceedingly.

2. Another way is that of mortification—*i.e.*, by deliberately choosing hard and disagreeable things in order to enable us to do the like when some choice has to be made in which God's praise is directly involved. Thus we may practise guarding the eyes, even where no direct danger is apprehended, in order to be ready to control our looks under all circumstances.

3. Especially, too, by cultivating a great love of God, and desire to do his will. Thus we deprive other motives of their force by contrast, and so gain our "indifference" indirectly. See how truly "indifferent" worldlings often are even to comfort or the opinion of others, nay, to life itself, by reason of some overmastering passion that has gained dominion over them.

XII.—The Foundation (12)

1. St Ignatius says we are to make ourselves "indifferent" to all things, so far as is permitted to the liberty of our will, and is not forbidden to it. Evidently we are not to train ourselves to be as ready to say *Yes* as to say *No* in a matter that is enjoined or prohibited. And even in the case of pursuits and persons, we are not always to train ourselves *directly* to be as ready to give them up as to cherish them.

2. In many cases "indifference" is to be aimed at *indirectly*, by strengthening the motives for always preferring the will of God to everything else. A good Christian mother does not directly moderate her affection for her child, but often reminds herself that God must be loved first and above all else, and so she will be prepared to deny her natural affection rather than permit any injury to the praise of God.

3. The final object of this "indifference" is that we may be able to live solely for the praise of God as our final end, always choosing what is more and more conducive to this end. Nothing can go beyond this; it is the ideal of life, an ideal that we have to learn to recognise as the *true* ideal, to which we will endeavour to approach. The only resolution called for here and now is to make the Exercises well.

XIII.—The Foundation (13)

1. The Foundation, as we have seen, may be said to set before us the ideal of human life. Man being what he is, and God being what he is, thus should man order his life, thus should he use his privilege of freedom. The Exercises are a great help towards this ideal, as far as thought and consideration and prayer may help; in making the Exercises well, with all possible thoroughness, a man is set on the path of the praise of God and of his own *salus*, or well-being.

2. Our blessed Lord—and may we not say he alone—fully realised this ideal in his human life. "My food is to do the will of him that sent me." "The things that are pleasing to my Father, I do always." This is praise indeed, the constant endeavour to please another, putting the will and good pleasure of another before all else.

3. Our Lady expresses it by the words: "My soul doth magnify the Lord." To magnify, to make much of a person, as we say, so that no other person or thing counts in comparison, is not this the highest praise? And what again is humility but the virtue which inclines us to make no account of self in comparison with the all-important God, who is not far off, but in whose presence we stand always?

MORTAL SIN

The eight numbers which follow deal with three cases of mortal sin: (1) the case of the fallen angels; (2) the case of our first parents; (3) the case of one who is supposed to be lost on account of one mortal sin.

The first two numbers are, properly speaking, preludes for those that follow; but they may well be taken as separate meditations, and then briefly recalled in making the rest.

Every meditation is, of course, intended to suggest matter for converse with God, or what is called *colloquy*; but the last number indicates the kind of *colloquy* that the whole subject leads up to, and may be joined to any that precede, and still more to repetitions of these.

XIV.—Sin (1)

General Background

1. My soul in the body as in a prison, a dungeon, an unpleasant place, hardly able to be kept habitable; the light too so dim, the air heavy and murky, sounds that make one shudder. The result of disgrace, disgrace incurred long before my time, but which I have made my own in a thousand ways of more or less perversity. And yet, who could imagine it, into this prison my Lord finds a way of entrance, to be to me food and drink.

2. Soul and body are in exile—another mark of disgrace; we are outcasts: but born to it, and cleaving to this land of misery by corrupt affection. And yet always a dead weight at the heart, a numb feeling of pain, a sense of being forgotten. "*Man born of woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries.*" So much sadness, uncertainty, fear, pain—just the contrary to the joyful serenity, peace, security, gladness of home and country.

3. And if we do not feel it much, it is because we have sunk so near the level of the brutes—our prison cell pleasant as its sty to the pig. *Homo cum in honore esset non intellexit; comparatus est jumentis insipientibus* (Man, when he was in honour, did not understand; he has become like the senseless beasts). We have to recognise in ourselves the *Caliban*—ready to kiss the foot of any that will give us to taste of his bottle, to acknowledge any master rather than the one wise and good God.

XV.—Sin (2)

Shame and Confusion

1. The fruit to be sought for first is that of shame and confusion, to be truly ashamed of myself. This is not contrition, nor even exactly attrition, but a very good preparation for both, and much needed if these are to be deep and lasting. We are ashamed when we are convicted of fooling in matters of serious import, of ingratitude, of sheer mischief, of believing lies rashly: many such motives are suggested.

2. It is natural to feel shame when we see others suffering, and suffering without chance of mitigation, for the same kind of misdeed as we are conscious of having been guilty of ourselves. If a man reads of the trial and condemnation and punishment of another, whose crime is of just the same nature as his own; still more if he is listening to the account being read in the presence of those who have reason to believe him guilty of the same, he feels ready to sink with shame into the earth.

3. And what if we see one who is *innocent* suffering, and suffering the consequences of our own base conduct: suffering in our place that we may go free: one not only innocent, but our benefactor, of far greater worth in every way than ourselves, one whom our misconduct has injured and dishonoured, and whose past goodness and generosity we have disregarded and outraged.

XVI.—Sin (3)

1. Whose estimate of mortal sin am I to take, if not that of Almighty God, who cannot judge or act in any way that is not supremely wise, good, and just? I want to see what God thinks of a single, grave sin, how he deals with it. I have, perhaps, committed quite a number of such sins, or at least have been on the way to doing so, so that if I had gone on *my* foolish way, I should have ended by committing mortal sin.

2. Look at the angels: beings by nature of marvellous perfection, brought out of nothing by God, pure intelligences! What visions of truth before their gaze! What capacities of appreciation, of delight, of love! What wonderful relations among themselves! What a glorious company, regarded as a host, and not merely as individuals! And yet great gaps in their ranks, vast numbers thrown away, as it were, as worse than useless.

3. And yet God had not only given them their being, their superb natural gifts, but had steeped them in divine grace: given them a form of life on an entirely new plane, which not even such creatures as they could naturally aspire to. God had elevated them in some sense to his own level, put them in immediate touch with himself. And yet great numbers were sent down into hell.

XVII.—Sin (4)

1. What happened to bring about this horrible change of angels into demons? They said *No* when they ought to have said *Yes*: they were free, and they misused their power of choice. They might have submitted, if they had so chosen, their will to the will of God, but they went against God, they offended him, disobeyed; and this though they knew they were violating the eternal law of justice.

2. And how could they act so? It is something of a mystery, no doubt; they were called upon, we may suppose, to do something which from one point of view seemed humiliating, seemed to make little of their natural excellence. On the other hand, they did not see with clear evidence that their true dignity, far from suffering loss, was enhanced; they were called upon for an act of trust and surrender to the wisdom and goodness and power of God.

3. So they lowered themselves into the altogether shameful, unnatural, false position of pride; they who were mere creatures and so nothing of themselves, are found playing the God before the eyes of the true and infinite God. They struck an attitude so grotesque, so hideous, that nothing remained but to sweep them away into hell, their whole being distorted, perverted, ruined.

XVIII.—Sin (5)

1. There is another sin, another example which I must force myself to consider, to which I must apply the powers of my soul, the sin of Adam and Eve. It was a sin for which they received pardon, but which entailed a long life of penance: a sin which infected with its poison and corruption the whole human race throughout its long history, and which really, one may say, turned the faces of all their descendants in the direction of hell, having as its natural outcome that all would come to perish miserably.

2. It approaches us more closely than the sin of the angels, for it is the sin of our first parents from whom we derive our being. They too were drawn out of nothing by God, created by him out of love, endowed with a wonderful nature, raised too by grace to a supernatural union with God, and capacity of reaching up to him and enjoying his friendship.

3. But they too disobeyed God, used their power of free will to fix their mind and desire on some partial gratification which he forbade. The result was that they found themselves straightway deprived of all the privileges God had bestowed on them, and so far as their own power was concerned, irrevocably lost, undone, damned.

XIX.—Sin (6)

1. How strange and mysterious this second sin! An entirely new race, distinct from the angels, a new departure on God's part, and yet a similar catastrophe! and here one involving every individual of the race. What an awful thing it seems to be, to have this power of choice, to be free to choose my own will in opposition to the will of God! What a terrible responsibility! What frightful havoc a misuse of this power can work!

2. *Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind have prevented the death of Lazarus?* So some of the Jews argued, and we are tempted to argue in the same way in regard to this universal corruption of the human race. Yes, but all such arguing is futile and out of place. The fault is altogether Adam's, and so it is in all sin. The sinner wilfully shuts his eyes to the truth, listens to what he knows is untruth, and that because it agrees in some way with what he perversely inclines to.

3. God cannot change, cannot ever come to take a more lenient view of sin. No one could have conceived how severe was about to be his judgement, how strict the terms on which he was prepared to remit the essential consequences of Adam's sin. The satisfaction demanded was to be *in rigore justitiae* (according to strict justice).

XX.—Sin (7)

1. The third case I may consider is that of an individual man who has gone to hell for one mortal sin unrepented of—whether it be his first, or committed after having been pardoned once or many times. Is such a case certain? We cannot assert that it is; but the hypothesis is a reasonable one, for most certainly one mortal sin is enough to sink the soul in that ocean of flame irrevocably. It is of the nature of mortal sin to bring about that result.

2. God is our Creator and eternal Lord: to offend him is the gravest of evils, the only evil. Moreover, he is infinite goodness; to turn from him is to turn away from all good, to cast in one's lot with the evil one. What comparison is there between a mortal sin and any other kind of false step? What, for example, is the good of human society as compared with that of God's honour? a serious crime against human society is punishable with death: all temporal good is lost for ever.

3. Look at such a one in hell, and consider how justly he is there. He contemned God; he said to his God, depart from me. What can he do to set things right? What can ever be done to restore any work of art that has been radically spoilt? It can only be made all over again, "*Because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil-doer, the children of men commit sin without fear.*"

XXI.—Sin (8)

1. What am I to say to my Lord? In spite of my attitude in regard to mortal sin, which would so easily have led to my being now among the lost, I am still safe! This is only to be explained by the event represented by the Crucifix. Who is it that I see there lifted up on the cross, as it were fixed there throughout the ages, his destined place of torment and shame unto the end? It is, as I firmly believe, Christ the Lord, the very Lord and Creator whom I have—slighted? outraged?

2. *O mira circa nos tuae pietatis dignatio!* (O wonderful condescension of thy goodness in our regard!) This is astonishing self-abasement indeed, and marvellous kindness towards me! He, truly God, has deigned to become a man, to make himself subject to death, actually to undergo a most cruel death in atonement for sin, for sin as rendering me displeasing to God, and a fit subject of his wrath. O fount of everlasting love, what am I to say of thee? I am made safe from the consequences of my course of action by the sufferings, death, and shame of God Incarnate, who has loved me.

3. And how has this excess of goodness affected me so far? What has been the position, the attitude taken up by me in the presence of my dying Redeemer, thus fastened to the Cross before my very eyes? How am I now treating him? What would be the proper, reasonable, fitting line of conduct for me to follow? How has that question been answered by others?

MY PERSONAL SINS

The second prelude, or special grace to be asked for in the following numbers, differs from that of the foregoing, and is given in the first. As before, this number may be taken as a separate meditation, and then briefly renewed before the rest. The general background remains the same, as given in XIV.

XXVIII gives the general colloquy, and the three subsequent numbers give subjects of special petition before passing on to the next Exercise.

XXII.—My Personal Sins (1)

1. Let me begin now to pray more directly for a great and intense sorrow for my sins, whatever they have been: for true contrition, a certain broken-heartedness, as of one who has done a great wrong against another, whom he realises now to have been loading him with benefits. He comes to realise all the patience and sweetness, all the care and kindness that has been lavished upon him all along, by one whom he has been treating—how? with contempt?

2. Sin has a double aspect; it harms ourselves, and it offends God. The former aspect is more tangible and is the motive of attrition; the latter is not so vividly apprehended, and it is always possible to reply that God is in no way injured or harmed or caused any pain or unhappiness by sin. Yet it remains true that the harm it does ourselves is not the chief reason for hating sin; it is not that that really makes it sin at all.

3. Just as my own happiness is not the chief good of heaven, but the glory I shall there render to God, so my own unhappiness is not the chief evil of the state of sin, but the dishonour to God. My reason assures me of this, though I cannot represent it to myself as I might wish. I have no doubt that the injury to God is a more cogent reason for hating sin than the injury to myself.

XXIII.—My Personal Sins (2)

1. Let me bring before my mind the bare simple record that there is against me. And yet how impossible to present even the barest record of my misdeeds! How suggestive is St Ignatius' word *processus*! Supposing my sins could be filmed, in such a way as to bring out not merely the outward act, but also the inward operations of memory, understanding, will, imagination, passion; and the whole film were to be shown on the screen. What a *processus* indeed!

2. And suppose it were divided into periods, so that it might more clearly appear how every stage and division of my life had its own special character of sinfulness. Or again, what if in such a film St Ignatius' plan were followed of showing how every place in which I have been has been defiled, every person with whom I have had intercourse been made an occasion of sin, every duty messed by wrong doing.

3. In this consideration, then, I try to form an idea of the extent to which sin has pervaded the years of my life. Suppose none had ever been wiped away, suppose I were simply what I was making myself to be. Suppose my sins had had their natural development and progress. Suppose a sore had appeared on my body for every sin, round about my eyes or lips. "*Each sin to thee of years gone by, each hidden stain lies bare.*"

XXIV.—My Personal Sins (3)

1. The unvarnished tale has been retold: these are the things I have been doing. They are evil things freely chosen; that we can see, but do we at all see *how* evil? Even in themselves and apart from any prohibition, or even if not prohibited. We are sometimes half-tempted to think that leave to sin would be desirable; but leave to sin would be leave to spoil, corrupt, defile human nature. God loves our nature with its wonderful beauty, dignity, capabilities.

2. What if my sins had been allowed to run their course—like a disease, each stage preparing for the next. How much worse than any beast should I have become! And what if all others around me took up the same line and followed it out? Would not earth be changed into hell? Is it not almost so changed so far as the inclinations and tendencies that prompt these sins of mine are allowed full play? Does not the individual soul, and human society, as it were, rot away?

3. We may think of the beauty of an innocent life, of every life till sin is allowed entrance to pervert it. What mischief, "*malitia*," is to be compared with that of sin? What disfigurement, "*foeditas*," is there like that of sin? We know that one who prefers torment, death, to the telling of one lie, has chosen incomparably the lesser evil.

XXV.—My Personal Sins (4)

1. What has been considered in the previous number does not touch the real evil of sin. To begin to appreciate this, we must turn to the sinner and to God. Who am I that commit sin? how insignificant! What am I in comparison with all mankind, past, present, and to come? I must take the same view of myself, as I so naturally take of one of the many million unfortunates, say, in China or in the slums of London. My position as one of the millions of human beings—like a leaf in the forests of the world!

2. But what is all mankind in comparison with the heavenly host, the heavenly court? What is this ant-hill in the universe in the sight of the choirs of angels? And what is all creation compared with God? "*All is before him as if it had no being at all, and is counted to him as nothing and vanity.*" "*The whole world is before thee as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew.*"

3. And to return to myself, what do I see? A body so redolent of corruption, a soul so weak, blind, ignorant, cowardly; and it is I who have hardly ceased for an instant to put out offensive and loathsome action before God's eyes, as though I were nothing but a festering sore, exuding disgusting matter—no nastiness being comparable to this wilfully manufactured filth, in which I have found my pleasure.

XXVI.—My Personal Sins (5)

1. And towards whom have I thus been so insolent and offensive? Alas! towards God, my Creator, the infinite God. Infinite, for example, in wisdom, and who deigned to instruct me in the truth, and even to admit me into his secrets in so many ways. And I, impertinent, pay little attention, preferring my own way of looking at things, priding myself on my cleverness, defending myself at God's expense, using the little spark of light he has given me to dispense with his guidance.

2. Or think of his power. I in some way set it at defiance, and raise my puny arm to resist it. I who can do nothing unless he hold me up all the time. I go against his sovereign, omnipotent will. I go to war with him, I who have nothing I can oppose to his almighty forces. And this I do with much arrogance and disrespect.

3. So of God's other attributes. He is infinite justice, the very source and rule of all rectitude, of all fairness and equity. He could not ask anything but what is exactly right. I keep preferring my own crooked, cheating ways, treating no one else so dishonestly as him. He infinitely good, I full of defect, and of what none could help turning from with disgust. He without any need of me, I having an immense need of him!

XXVII.—My Personal Sins (6)

1. Alas! I lift up my hand against God, I do mischief with his creatures, with all his gifts; I expose myself in all sorts of ways to his displeasure and anger; I neither trust, nor fear, nor honour, nor consult him as I ought; I play a vulgar comedy in his presence, and seem to be the only one who is not alive to its unseemliness and indecency; I spoil a whole world created to his honour and glory. How horrible it is!

2. And meanwhile what is going on around me? I am encircled by God's servants and ministers, by all kinds of forces that are at his disposal; I am dependent in every way, at every moment, on his property, his resources, always living on his bounty; and all God's creatures and instruments have been caring for me, tending me, supplying my wants, anticipating my wishes, waiting on me, fetching for me, amusing, entertaining, petting me, and doing it all lovingly, reverently, sweetly, cheerfully.

3. And this at his orders, under his direction and influence, he being behind it all. And all that is most dear and precious to him has been thinking of me and helping me: Saints, angels, Mary, Jesus himself. This when he might have been creating new hells to engulf me, when he might at least have left me to drop into the hell there is. And I going about with my head in the air, like some silly fool: and would it were but foolishness, and not wickedness!

XXVIII.—My Personal Sins (7)

1. *Miserere mei, Domine, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.* Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy; on me, so full of iniquity and sin. I scarce dare look up to thee, whom I have so often and so grievously offended. And yet when I do raise my eyes, and look up at thee, what do I see? I see thee regarding me with eyes full of compassion, of tenderness, of love. I see no sign of contempt, of disgust, of anger.

2. Nay, I hear thee, strangely indeed, excusing thyself and asking me if I have anything against thee, that I should have so turned against thy divine Majesty. "*I am he*," I hear thee say, "*that blot out thy iniquities for my own sake, and I will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance, and let us plead together; tell, if thou hast anything to justify thyself.*"

3. No, my God, I have nothing; I cannot excuse myself. Lo, I throw myself on thy mercy. I surrender myself entirely into thy hands. Do with me according to thy goodness, not according to my badness and baseness. Despise not this sinful life of mine, known to none other as it is known to thee. O most sweet Lord of all things, and dear Saviour Jesus, what manner of fitting thanksgiving can I offer; I must begin to repent and to do better (*Imit.*).

XXIX.—Special Petitions (1)

1. Let me pray from my heart for an inward knowledge of my sins, and to abhor them. Pray to know my sins, as such, in their inmost nature, as they really are; to know them somewhat as I should know and see into them, were I to pass out of this world of appearances into that of realities. The previous exercises have been directed to the gaining of this knowledge, but I must pray for it as for a special grace that only God can give me.

2. *Delicta quis intelligit?* Who, indeed, understands sin? Its foulness, malice, folly, insolence, ingratitude; its utter injustice in every sense of the word; what it has cost Jesus, our Saviour, the pain, anguish, torture; the harm it has done to myself, to those around me, the wrong done to God.

3. Look again at Christ upon the cross. This is the monument sin has raised upon the earth. This is what sin brings about, when God takes to himself a nature capable of experiencing its terrible effects. This is God's measure of the evil of sin, of the due remedy for it, if remedy there is to be. There are moments when we do, perhaps, get a passing vision of the nature of sin: at such moments we do feel that no abhorrence is adequate, no penance disproportionate, no precaution excessive. Pray that the vision may endure.

XXX.—Special Petitions (2)

1. Pray, too, for a sense of the disorderly character of our ways of action, our ways of going on, in order that abhorring that also, I may set it right, and arrange my life properly. Some may think that disorderly action is only another name for sin; that it is sin under a particular aspect. But perhaps it goes beyond what is strictly sin.

2. Is there not, perhaps, a great deal in my way of going on, which, without being definitely sin, yet implies a very defective sense of the evil of sin, a result of very foolish notions about sin, and of the just claims of Almighty God upon our carefulness in his service? If we think of the precautions St Aloysius took to render sin as remote a possibility as he could, and compare them with our precautions, what are we to think? Disorder is rather the manifold preparation, opening of the road for sin.

3. The amount and sort of prayer we think suitable; the neglect of warnings, inspirations, mortification, generosity with God; the putting aside of a call to some general line of conduct, or course of life and action, the rejection of a vocation: life being thus placed on a lower plane, and a whole series of graces left on one side. These things may well excite a certain horror, in proportion as we gain something of the fruit of the exercises on sin.

XXXI.—Special Petitions (3)

1. Ask, too, for a knowledge of the world, to know what our Lord meant by the world, when he said he prayed not for the world as such. Human society, so far as it more or less ignores God's claims, lives to please itself, treats God's creatures as its own playthings, refuses to recognise sin, as such, makes the three concupiscences the rule of life. I have to know it as in myself, a spirit that has animated me, and in harmony with which I so often think and speak and act.

2. I ask to abhor it; not evidently to abhor the individual persons who belong to it, nor yet merely an abstract theory of life, but in its concrete realisation. It is a hateful influence, actually at work: it has an attractive side, and can make itself agreeable enough, but its real, inner character is detestable.

3. I pray, too, that I may more and more remove from myself, and remove myself from, vain and worldly things, the furniture of the world, all that encourages and feeds its peculiar spirit, all that arms and encourages it in its opposition to God and to the spirit of Christ, my Saviour; all that helps to render it hard and stubborn, and impervious to the teaching of the Gospel, that feeds its vanity, ambition, jealousy, disobedience; in a word, its sensuality and pride.

The first two numbers are, properly speaking, preludes for those that follow, and the last is the general colloquy. See what is said on p. 17.

XXXII.—Hell (1)

1. What our faith teaches us about Hell is that it is the fixed abode of the fallen angels and of those of the human race who die impenitent after having committed actual mortal sin; that the pain is two-fold, negative, inasmuch as they are deprived of the ineffable happiness of heaven, and positive, inasmuch as this very deprivation is a terrible torture, and also inasmuch as after the resurrection of the body the pain of sense is exceedingly great; and thirdly, that it is everlasting.

2. Holy Scripture consistently represents the place in which the lost are imprisoned as a furnace of flame, a pool of fire, the gehenna of fire. There can be no question that we are invited by the inspired text and by the words of Christ himself recorded therein to regard it as a place of hopeless and utter torment and misery, in which the fire is not merely metaphorical, but a material environment that even to the very demons is keen and piercing as a flame.

3. "*These then are the tabernacles of the wicked: and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.*" "*This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the inheritance of his doings from the Lord*" (Job xviii 20). It is better for thee, says our blessed Lord, to enter into life maimed, than to go into hell, into unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished (Mark ix 42, 43).

XXXIII.—Hell (2)

1. In these meditations on Hell, I should pray, as the fruit of them, for an intimate, a penetrating sense of the pains which the damned suffer, that they may make a vivid, a lively impression on my soul, in order that I may have a great fear of God's judgements; not exactly an ever-present fear, not one that is always oppressing and weighing me down, but a fear that is always there, ready to come to the front if it should be needed, a fear of the punishment of mortal sin.

2. I may cease to be moved by the love of my eternal Lord: love, reverence, gratitude, may for the time being lose their power over me, under stress of passion, of desire, of fear. The bonds of charity may not avail to keep me bound to my cross, to the cross to which every Christian must in some true sense remain steadfastly fastened, if he is to be one with Christ.

3. This may specially happen if I become negligent, and full of more or less deliberate venial sin, and of disorderly habits. These seem to push back love into the inmost citadel of the soul, from which it cannot operate effectually in the suburbs and outskirts of the city, which I have to defend against the enemy.

XXXIV.—Hell (3)

1. The sights of Hell! The flames and the beings therein immersed, as though in bodies of fire. "*If anyone abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth.*" The rich man "*lifts up his eyes in hell.*" See his look, the expression on his face, and on the faces of all around. "*They are laid in hell,*" says the Psalmist, "*like sheep; death shall feed on them.*"

2. The sounds of Hell! the hissing of the flames. "*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!*" The everlasting wail! Esau's loud cry! The birthright sold, and the mess of pottage gone. *The harvest is past, the summer days are gone, and we are not saved.* There is no diminution of energy, it is a fearfully active life, and the utterance of this most active, energetic life, a life of hate and despair, is what we hear.

3. "*Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire.*" "*Amen, I say to you, I know you not.*" The last words heard before the door was shut, and they ring in the ears of the lost unceasingly. "*Between us and you a great chaos is fixed.*" Satan at home! receiving his dupes: tortured, while triumphing and torturing his captives. "*All bound together in a chain of darkness, and to themselves more grievous than the darkness.*"

XXXV.—Hell (4)

1. The stench of Hell! Hell is a sewer as well as a furnace, a place of everlasting nausea, as well as everlasting burning. It is the refuse-heap of men and angels, those who have refused God, and are in turn refused by him: what, indeed, is any foulest stench in this world but the faintest whiff, so to say, of the stench of burning souls! This is corruption indeed; how horrible to inhale it from afar, but to be of it! to be oneself nothing but a festering sore, and rotten to the core.

2. The tastes of Hell! the bitterness, the gnawing hunger, the worm of conscience. Always a bad taste rising to the palate! *Remember thy past life!* There is no relief from bitter remorse, from useless regrets. "*Thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime.*" Good things! the pleasures chosen instead of God! We fools! We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity . . . and have walked hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known.

3. The sense of touch! How the flames touch the very souls of the lost! "*They shall cast him into the fire, and he burneth.*" "*Amen, I say to you, fear not them that kill the body.*" Fear not in comparison the torments of the martyrs, the horrors of war, the accidents and diseases of this life. "*Dabit Deus his quoque finem*" (To all these God will give an end).

XXXVI.—Hell (5)

1. "*Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.*" A figurative word, perhaps, but not the less, rather ever so much the more, expressive of the great torment of Hell, the torment of thirst. The craving for happiness, the craving for that from which alone any happiness can come, the craving for God. And yet the unhappy soul has been cast off by God.

2. *Ubi nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabitat.* The attitude of the soul towards itself. It must still love itself in a sense, and yet is it love or is it hate? It must still be drawn to the truth, and yet the truth itself is furiously hated, that truth whose beauty it penetrates as never before. God is recognised as the supreme and only good, and yet such love as it has for God is rather hate, a longing to have, and a longing to destroy, a hatred that is itself a terrible torture, a perpetual *contemplatio ad odium.*

3. The pain of despair! From the last judgement especially onwards. I lived fifty years, and I have been 5,000 in Hell. Here must I dwell for ever, without hope or prospect of any kind. "*Bind his hands and feet and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" "*Ye would not,*" and before this "*would not*" omnipotent love had to retire, and own itself baffled.

XXXVII.—Hell (6)

What is our belief, our firm belief? That for us, for myself, there are only two final issues of life possible, Salvation and Damnation. If we are damned, to us will apply all that our Lord said of the wicked. He certainly has not minced the truth; he knew he was going to die upon the cross to save us; he always proclaimed that the punishments of sin, if not repented of in time, were terrible. Nothing, again, is clearer in the Church's teaching; she has never departed a hair's-breadth from the doctrine of her Founder. My final destiny will soon be decided; it must be Heaven or Hell. There is always a strong current Hell-wards: I must resist it. *Qui se existimat stare, videat ne cadat* (He that thinks himself to stand, let him beware lest he fall). God is full of mercy, but he is not easy-going. If I have ever committed mortal sin, I must sincerely detest it above all things, turn away from it absolutely; otherwise I cannot escape Hell. This must be my habitual attitude towards mortal sin.

My God, I firmly believe that I cannot escape the punishments of Hell, unless I sincerely detest all mortal sin, and am resolved never to commit it. I *do* then, with the help of thy grace, detest my sins, and am fully resolved never again to offend thee by grievous sin. This is attrition.

XXXVIII.—Hell (7)

O my God, "*who shall say to thee, what hast thou done? or who shall withstand thy judgement? or who shall come before thee to be an avenger of wicked men? or who shall accuse thee? There is no other God but thou, who hast care of all, that thou shouldst show that thou dost not give judgement unjustly*" (Wisd. xii).

O my loving Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who hast died to save men from going to Hell! I cannot but call to mind many reasons, in spite of this thy mysterious love and condescension, that point to there being many, many souls in Hell. So many there seem to be who have either chosen not to believe, or believing, have not lived up to their belief. So many, it would seem, before thy coming, so many even whilst thou wert on earth, so many since thou didst ascend into Heaven. Yes, my Lord, the procession seems a long and unbroken one: I cannot but fear that it really is so. How easily might I have been placed in one or other of these divisions! How easily might it have happened that I should have been allowed to die, after having been permitted to fall into sin. How richly have I deserved the withdrawal of that special providence that has prevented me! What wonderful goodness thou hast shown me. "*Fecisti ultra omnem spem misericordiam cum servo tuo, et ultra omne meritum gratiam et amicitiam exhibuisti!*" (*Imit.*).

VENIAL SIN

1ST PRELUDE: *Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick* (John xi 3).

2ND PRELUDE: Pray for a horror and detestation of deliberate venial sin.

Further meditations on such subjects as Death, Judgement, etc., are in place after this Exercise.

XXXIX.—Venial Sin (1)

1. It is very necessary to hold fast to the doctrine that mortal sin requires full knowledge, or at least full subjective certainty, of the gravity of the action, and full consent of the will to the action thus recognised as grievous. On the other hand, we cannot profess to be certain of the exact point where *venial* sin begins: things we hardly admit to ourselves to be venial sins may well be so.

It is useful to have before the mind the following three kinds of venial sin: (1) those that are chosen for their own sake—*i.e.*, because the sin itself appeals to us in some way, gratifies some passion or some faulty disposition; such may be venial sins that endanger purity, temperance, sins that gratify ill-will, the desire of self-glorification and the like.

2. Other sins are in no way pleasurable in themselves, but are deliberately chosen as means to an end—a lie, for example, a theft, omission of a task. If our end could be gained without offending God, we should be quite content; but we prefer to offend God to losing the gain or object we have in view.

3. Thirdly, there are venial sins of mere frailty; we do not take the trouble to avoid them; there is no positive pleasure *in* them, nor *through* them. They are due to infirmity or slackness, often but half deliberate and intentional.

XL.—Venial Sin (2)

1. Wilfully chosen venial sins, such as those described of the first and second class in the previous meditation, are a great dishonour to God; there is known and direct opposition to his will, there is refusal to submit even though he tells us distinctly not to act as we do. It is the greatest evil short of mortal sin. We are almost inclined to wonder why it is not mortal sin, or at least whether God could not make it mortal, if he chose to declare it so.

2. We should convince ourselves too of the ingratitude involved in such venial sins; for we seem to make no account of all the benefits we have received from God—nay, we turn his very gifts against him. So too when we think of God, as our Redeemer, of Christ our Lord, what an answer is venial sin to his appeals for our gratitude! *Quid ultra debui facere?* These sins render all friendship so cold, and intimacy impossible. They are a series of slights and insults, and offered to him, who is saving us from the consequences.

3. *Saturabitur opprobriis* (He shall be sated with reproaches). Yes, indeed; we refrain from crucifying him again, it may be; but we cannot refrain from offering him gall and vinegar upon his cross. Everything is of moment to one who is being crucified—everything matters. *Facta es mihi nimis amara.* You did what you knew would give me pain.

XLI.—Venial Sin (3)

1. Turning from our Lord to ourselves, we may think how venial sin certainly deprives us of many special graces, of God's special protection, of that guidance of the Holy Spirit which we need so much in proportion as we have special responsibilities. They diminish my credit, so to say, with God, take away all the real contentment we are meant to find in God's service, all that sense of nearness and union with God, in which there is so much comfort, changing all my spiritual life into weariness and disgust.

2. Think, too, of the effect upon our neighbour, whom we ought to be encouraging and strengthening in the difficult path of virtue. Our venial sins injure him in many ways: often their very nature is injurious, inasmuch as they wound charity, or else indirectly they scandalise him, making it more difficult for him to be faithful and to overcome temptation; they render us less fit for all those offices in which we should be serving him.

3. We may well find, too, a motive to help us in the thought of Holy Communion, in that close association with Christ, which requires of us the cleansing of our heart from all attachment to sin. "*See the place where they laid him*," said the angels at the sepulchre. See the place where he has been born again, the crowded, unpleasant inn, instead of the cave, which at least contained nothing that was offensive.

XLII.—Venial Sin (4)

1. Carelessness about venial sin leads, as we know, to that unhappy state, to which has been given the name *tepidity* : that sickly state in which there is no generosity in God's service, no anxiety to make progress, no effort to lessen the number of our faults, no relish or desire for spiritual things, no solicitude to use the opportunities of grace, no advertence to the consequences of our actions, to the greater frequency and growing strength even of serious temptations.

2. And what is taking the place of all interest in spiritual things? Perhaps, indeed, a serious and in itself worthy pursuit, but carried on in a merely natural way; but far more often, life becomes disorderly, and vain and worldly things occupy the mind and heart. The more frivolous and sensual side of our nature is gratified; unprofitable reading and mere amusement consumes time and energies; there is general lowering of thoughts, views, principles, maxims.

3. And what is very characteristic, there is a certain self-satisfaction, a tendency to compare self with others to our own advantage, while we are becoming less and less satisfactory and pleasing to God, who is beginning "*to vomit us out of his mouth*." There is a gradual estrangement from God, which makes the restoration of true fervour and friendship extremely difficult. What a sad outcome of a good and fervent beginning!

CHRIST'S KINGDOM

Each of the following fifteen pages may, it is thought, be taken as the material of meditation and mental prayer: the first two, however, are preliminary to the main subject, and the third gives the preludes that are common to all that follow.

There is no colloquy, properly speaking, to this Exercise, any more than to the Foundation; but in LVI we have a form of self-oblation proposed, such as might be adopted by one who had fully made the spirit of this Exercise his own. All the Exercises that follow this one are intended to help us to approach the ideal set forth in this act of oblation.

XLIII.—Christ's Kingdom (1)

1. I conclude from the previous Exercises that if my life as a man—that is, my free actions—are to be directed to God's praise, I must make steady effort to be ready to choose on the side of poverty, dishonour, sickness, and even death, no less than on the side of their contraries. But what a hopeless endeavour! What mere reflection on the abstract truth of the Foundation will ever enable me to do this? And even the Exercises on Sin, though certainly supplying the most cogent motives for choosing on the side of what is difficult to nature, yet leave such choice most hard and burdensome.

2. Moreover, I cannot but recognise from what I have pondered that a large part of my duty will lie precisely in choosing on the side which is painful to flesh and blood; I ought to associate myself with the Cross, both to render sin more remote in the future, and to atone for it in the past. I am very unworthy, too, that God should put himself out, as it were, to render this easy for me; I cannot complain if my life is to be one of painful struggle and labour.

3. Here it is that Christ comes forward, and offers to help me by his example, by his everyday example, and not merely by the inimitable sufferings of his Passion; he comes to encourage me in my daily efforts at self-conquest, assuring me that he needs my help in his work, that all I do will be a favour to himself, and that he will make my labours sweet and easy by his leadership and companionship.

XLIV.—Christ's Kingdom (2)

1. Thy kingdom come! We are invited to enter into a new sphere, to undergo a complete transformation; a new spirit is to be put into us, and is to banish the old, worldly spirit, which has so possessed us heretofore. We are to be born again, not exactly in the sense that we are to pass for the first time into the supernatural, but that we are to realise what the true supernatural life is.

2. No doubt Christ's kingdom and cause has an exterior, visible, social aspect, but that very aspect has rather the nature of a means. His work is indeed to be brought about in a human way, a way in accordance with the nature of man, and so through a human organisation, and the more perfect that organisation is, the better his work will be done. Certainly *the Church* is in a true sense Christ's kingdom upon earth.

3. But the end, the true end, is his kingdom in the soul, in each individual soul. Each soul is a world to be conquered by him and for him. It is this aspect of Christ's kingdom that we are chiefly concerned with in the Exercises. Christ wishes to reign there, to live there, to reproduce therein, as far as possible, such another canticle of praise as was offered in his own soul to God, while he was on earth. This is my soul's true happiness also, its health, its salvation. It is within me that the warfare has to be carried on, the victory to be won for him, his enemies to be crushed. *In me regna, Fili Dei, regna, regna libere* ("Within me reign, O Son of God, reign, reign, as you will").

XLV.—Christ's Kingdom (3)

General Background and Fruit

1. Let me go back in imagination to the time and place of Christ's life upon earth. Here as in other mysteries of the life of Christ, if the time seems long to us that has passed since, this deprives the events of none of their meaning and significance for us. The place may still be seen and visited where the Man, who was also truly God, went about teaching, sowing the seed, planting in the mind and heart of man by word and example those fundamental principles by which his reign is to be established and to flourish in the heart. There it was that he called now one, now another, to become his disciple, and in some degree at least, his Apostle. He called for complete faith and trust and self-surrender. Follow me, interiorly as much as possible, exteriorly according to the call I give you.

2. We must be praying throughout for the grace to open our ears to his teaching and call. We are all more or less deaf, not taking in the full import of his advice and injunctions, not answering the invitation they imply. We are in many things as though we did not hear. Of course, if we did not hear at all, there could not be said to be any call. Let us pray that this too may not be from fault of ours. Pray that I may be alert, prompt, diligent, that I may have the keen hearing of one who loves, and readiness to carry out to the utmost Christ's will and call in my regard, putting no obstacle to its fulfilment.

XLVI.—Christ's Kingdom (4)

1. In a certain sense there is no *direct* appeal to the will in this consideration; but the nature of the subject, unlike the Foundation, is such as to stir the heart of one who is sensitive to ideas of loyalty, gratitude, generosity, and the like. In itself, however, it is but a statement of fact, and of the outcome of the facts. It has not even any colloquy, strictly speaking, set before the Exercitant to make his own, as the immediate conclusion of the Exercise; in this, too, it resembles the Foundation. In fact, it is to the rest of the Exercises what the Foundation is to the whole. It is a new fundamental principle of asceticism, but subordinate to the first.

2. It evidently falls into two main parts: (1) The parable; and (2) the application of the parable to the real case of Christ the King. The parable is the outcome of St Ignatius' own character, his temperament, breeding, surroundings. All these led him to represent to himself the establishment of Christ's reign in the soul, and in the hearts of men, under the form of a military enterprise. It is not essential to do this, though, perhaps, more natural than to use any other comparison. As a matter of fact, Christ himself did not put such an idea prominently forward, lest he should seem to be encouraging the expectations of temporal sovereignty that were prevalent among his people.

XLVII.—Christ's Kingdom (5)

The parable falls into three parts, nearly corresponding to persons, words, actions.

1. The person of the human leader, the earthly king: a man, a mere man, but one endowed with all those advantages of nature and of fortune that mark the true king among men, that give every claim to honour and service; his authority undisputed, and his personal character worthy of his high position. One of those men who captivate their fellows, and call forth all that is best and noblest in others. One with every right to rule and to command, though he is not going to use his right to *command* in this case.

2. He *invites* to a military expedition, one evidently just and demanded: there is no doubt of the bad faith, evil intentions, dangerous designs of the foe, even less doubt of the motive of this king, which is nothing but the safety and welfare of his people. And whom does he address? His nobles, those who make profession of arms, of service, whose very life it is to serve and follow their king in battle. He asks for free service, but once given, it must be given whole-heartedly.

3. What should be the answer of any soldier to this call of his king? What if anyone should hold back, content to reap the benefit of security at the expense of the dangers faced by his king and his fellow-officers? Certainly such a one would be held as all but a traitor, and certainly as a poltroon.

XLVIII.—Christ's Kingdom (6)

1. The parable is to be applied to Christ our Lord. We may, perhaps, take for granted what might be said of the person of Christ, of his personal character as man (for it is *as man* that he is proposed to us as our leader and king), far nobler, far more beautiful and lovable than that of any other of the sons of men. To bring out all that is captivating, all that is calculated to arouse sympathy, admiration, loyalty, love, towards Christ, would be simply to go through the record of his words and actions.

2. His titles to our service, again, are incomparably greater than those of any mere earthly king and ruler; for he is truly Lord of heaven and earth, he is the true head of our race. Certainly if one of the divine Persons deigns to become man, then by virtue simply of his supreme dignity and dominion over all created things, he has every right that we should place ourselves entirely under his leadership for whatever work he may deign to call upon us.

3. But more: he has begun by making us his own, *suos*, by a new title; he has redeemed us, rescued us from slavery. We are Christians, we owe our freedom and all our dignity to him, and not merely to his power, or even to his goodness, but to his self-sacrifice, to his precious blood shed to the last drop, to make us worthy to be his friends, his comrades, his chosen followers in the most glorious of all enterprises.

XLIX.—Christ's Kingdom (7)

1. It is to us, then, who owe everything to his generosity, that his appeal is made. He calls upon us, whom he has rescued from shame and slavery, and made into an honourable people, a glorious nation, to take our part in his own great enterprise. My will, he says, is to continue, and to extend to the whole world what I have already done in part for you; to bring all into subjection to myself, into the enjoyment of the privileges and blessings of my own beneficent rule, in the sense of being guided and governed by my spirit.

2. For it is, indeed, in its essence a spiritual kingdom, an interior kingdom, the introduction of the law and counsels of Christ into the heart, and so into the various groups and societies in which men operate. This spirit of Christ is the reign of Christ in the heart, a reign that brings peace and happiness to the individual and to any body of men that is guided by it.

3. He invites, then, each of us to share in this undertaking, and before all, of course, to co-operate in giving him full sovereignty in our own heart. He has begun this work, he wishes us to participate in perfecting it. The reign of Christ in the hearts of all is the highest good for men, the highest glory to God. To conquer in this sense is the aim of all Christ's action, and we are invited to share in the warfare and in the glory of the victory.

L.—Christ's Kingdom (8)

1. Yes, to bring my own heart, and the hearts of many others through my action under the sway of our true king, that is what I am invited to do: to carry on an active propaganda against all that retards this happy issue, this victorious conquest of souls for God through our Lord, it is for this he appeals to us. To enter with him into his eternal glory is the prospect he holds out to us.

2. And what are the enemies to be attacked and overthrown under his guidance and leadership? We know from the first week of the Exercises that the great enemy is *sin*. Sin is the great evil, as a Socialist might say of Capitalism. The preliminary work has been done by Christ alone: sin has been atoned for, the means secured by which its ravages can be substantially repaired, its future attacks repelled. Sin and all that leads to sin is the very antithesis of the spirit of Christ, of the spirit of true humility.

3. All that leads to sin! We know what leads to sin: the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, the pride of life. The warfare against these is now to be undertaken as a service to Christ. The weapons of our warfare are all those means which he invites us by word and example to employ, in order to weaken and render powerless the forces of the enemy.

LI.—Christ's Kingdom (9)

1. We have seen what Christ means when he says: It is my desire to bring the whole world into subjection, and to overcome every opposing power. We see, too, in general what he must mean when he invites a man, already enfranchised and ennobled by him, to labour with him; we know, too, the recompense he offers. This invitation reaches different men in very different degrees, according to laws we cannot define. Suffice it to say it has reached ourselves.

2. Who are they that make no response? For our purpose, we may say they are those who simply propose to do no more than continue to avail themselves of the privileges won for them by the labours and sufferings of Christ, to save their souls in the narrow sense, who do not look beyond a faith-enlightened self-interest, who are more or less passive, do not care to take any positive part in the campaign.

3. Many such, no doubt, will share the fruits of the victory: such is Christ's goodness that he recognises them as his subjects, and continues to acknowledge their rights of citizenship. Many such at one time or another are guilty of practices more or less treasonable, but he pardons them, and even after their pardon, they maintain their ungenerous attitude. Certain precautions he enjoins, and these they adopt, but for the most part without much earnestness or constancy.

LII.—Christ's Kingdom (10)

1. We have described those who may be said to make no response to Christ's call. Next there will be those who *do* agree, who *do* respond with some degree of alacrity and of self-surrender. Let us realise here that there is every degree of service. All really want to do something positive, not merely to refrain from malpractices. And with all, the common characteristic is a certain sense of duty, of right conduct, without much sense of honour or generosity.

2. But after all even duty and common sense would logically lead a man, a reasonable being, to refuse no service that Christ asks, to promote his cause to the utmost of his ability and opportunities. Yes, this class extends to those whose mind is made up to accept any duty, any post that they are called upon to accept.

3. But they have no particular hope or desire that much will be asked; they are not anxious to be put in the post of danger. Not all can be in the most dangerous positions, and such positions have no special attraction for them: the offensive, the initiative, the adventurous is not in their line; they are content with not putting any obstacle to their being employed in any way that is wanted. They are not the kind that win the V.C., reliable though they are. As long as they feel they have done their duty, they are satisfied.

1. The third answer is that of honour and love, of generous souls, of those who wish to be more and more devoted to Christ the King; of those who not only desire to show greater and greater affection towards Christ, but to grow ever more in affection and attachment; of those who recognise that to give their whole hearts to him, and to give up and suffer everything for his love, is the very best lot that can befall them. *Visne sanus fieri?* (Do you wish to be made whole?) is one question; *Visne magis affici erga Christum?* (Do you wish to become more and more in love with Christ?) is another.

2. It is the answer, too, of those who long to be *insignes*, to distinguish themselves in every kind of service towards their King, to signalise themselves, to be in the foremost rank. They will take up a position of uncompromising hostility towards the anti-Christian spirit; they will hope to be chosen for special service, in which the loss inflicted on the enemy may be specially severe, and rejoice at being assigned to the position where the enemy is engaged most closely.

3. The great difference between these and the former is *initiative*, longing to be in the thick of the fight. Remember humiliation and suffering is not defeat, it is being *in action*;[1] and only thus can real progress be made. And yet remember too, that an officer cannot be sure *a priori* that his commander wants him to be in action, rather than in some defensive position, however sure he is that his own eagerness is appreciated.

[1] For this, as perhaps for one or two other expressions, the writer is glad to acknowledge his obligations to Fr. Joseph Rickaby's Comments on *The Exercises*.

LIV.—Christ's Kingdom (12)

There is no colloquy, properly speaking, for this Exercise, any more than for the Foundation; but we are told the sort of offering which these last will make. They will tell their leader in all simplicity that it will not be their fault, nor for want of volunteering, if they are not in the thickest of the fight. This is what it comes to. They may find themselves out of action, not exposed to those distresses of body and mind which their longing to be near their leader makes them covet. If so, they will do what they can, even in their position of comparative immunity, to strike a blow for the cause; and as these blows are directed towards internal foes, the opportunity can hardly ever be altogether wanting.

To make such an offering may not be entirely in our power here and now; it is the fruit of the rest of the Exercises, or at least some nearer approach to it is the fruit. It is a growing spirit, and we grow, too, in recognising the calls and opportunities that Christ provides us with, for proving our devotion. The soldier becomes more alive and skilful, and more like his leader, as time goes on. Things are vague at this stage; we know in general what the enemies are, and how their force is to be broken; and as we come to know and love Christ better, we gain more insight into what his designs are for us in particular.

LV.—Christ's Kingdom (13)

1. If the *Foundation* presents the ideal of human life, we may say that the *Kingdom* presents the ideal of the Christian life. The first step to be taken by one who wishes to aim at the ideal of human life is to put away sin, past, present, and future, as far as he can. And having done that, he naturally considers what he is to do positively to conform his life to the will of God, and so to give God the fullest measure of praise in his power.

2. God does not leave him to his own reasonings in this matter, but became Incarnate to exhibit the very model of perfect human life. To pretend to praise God, and not to enter the school, the military school we may say, of Christ, would, indeed, be absurd. We can now in a sense prescind from the praise of God in the abstract, and make it simply our one aim to follow Christ, to put ourselves entirely under his command.

3. And the question will be, not simply: What does Christ my King ask of me? But: How closely, I wonder, will he deign to associate me with himself in his work of conquering all hearts for God's praise and glory? It is evident that the opposing influences are sensuality, carnal love, worldly love, or the three concupiscences, or flesh, world, and devil. These I renounce and utterly declare war upon: but how far will Christ deign to choose me for actual open combat?

LVI.—Christ's Kingdom (14)

1. The ideal Christian, then, contemplating in general the person of Christ, the purpose of Christ's life, the plan which he follows in the pursuit of this purpose, sets himself in will and desire in sternest opposition to the three opposing influences, and will go against them in act so far as ever his king and leader will not refuse him leave. Hence the offering which St Ignatius puts upon his lips:

2. "O eternal Lord of all things, I make my oblation with thy gracious approval and help, in presence of thine infinite goodness, and in the presence of thy glorious Mother, and all the saints, men and women, of thy heavenly court, declaring that it is my will and desire, yes, and my deliberate resolve, provided that, and so far as it is to thy greater service and praise, to imitate thee in enduring every kind of injury, every kind of reproach, all manner of poverty, actual as well as spiritual, if only thy most holy Majesty shall wish to choose and accept me for such a life and enduring lot."

3. It cannot be Christ's intention to choose each and all for the posts of greatest exposure to and endurance of suffering, any more than in earthly warfare it can be the intention of a commander that each and all should be "in action," or in the thickest of the fight; but all should covet this distinction, and the commander is more likely to select for dangerous and difficult service one who is eager for it, and is known to aspire to it.

LVII.—Christ's Kingdom (15)

1. St Ignatius, as we see, makes it clear that it is not enough for one who wants to signalise himself, to be merely ready to do what he is told; but he must have the desire to be called upon for the most arduous service, and show his desire by missing no opportunity that he can take without prejudice to his obedience.

2. But how can we attain this heroic disposition of soul, how can we make such sentiments as those expressed in the "*oblatio*" our own? Evidently only in proportion as our love for Christ becomes the all-consuming passion, that it has been in every age in the hearts of the saints. All we can do is to resolve that we will come out of the Exercises, with Christ's help, with more of it than we have ever had before.

3. Is it possible to have a too great desire to suffer for Christ? We may answer *No*. But it is possible to let this very desire lead us into imagining that some particular form of suffering is for Christ, is in accordance with his designs in our regard, when it is not. There may be some delusion and some corresponding inordinate choice. This very desire to imitate Christ, not merely in heart but in act, must be subordinate to what is most to the praise of God. This last is the end, even for Christ, the only aim that is absolutely unconditioned. Of the *end* there can be no excess.

THE INCARNATION

The first two numbers give the preludes for this Exercise: see p. 17. The last may serve as a useful repetition.

LVIII.—The Incarnation (1)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. The three divine Persons contemplate in their eternity the whole expanse of the world's history, both in space and time; not only such as it actually was to be, but such as it would have been from beginning to end had there been no redemption, no decree to apply a remedy to the fall, and to all that was to follow as the result of man's misuse of the prerogative of liberty. It was this condition of things, unspeakably pitiable, that God decreed to put right by sending his Son to bring salvation.

2. And this decree was actually carried out in due time; meanwhile, in view of what this divine person was to merit in his human nature, a continuous stream of grace and mercy was ever descending upon the race during the ages that were to intervene between the sin of Adam and the coming of the Redeemer.

3. One spot the three divine persons can contemplate with exceeding pleasure as the outcome of their decree, the spot where the little house at Nazareth appears, whither they will send the angel to bear their message to the Virgin Mary: to gain her consent to be the mother of the Saviour, the mother of the Word Incarnate, Mother of God: her consent to this wedding of the divine with the human.

LIX.—The Incarnation (2)

1. I must keep longing and praying for the grace to have an intimate knowledge of this divine Saviour, of this my Lord, who is truly man out of love for me, while never ceasing to be truly God. I beg to know him as he reveals himself to me, as he deigns to discover all the perfection and beauty and nobility of his sacred manhood; to know Jesus, Son of God, and Son of Mary, than whom *Nil canitur suavius, auditur nil jucundius, nil cogitatur dulcius* (Nothing sweeter is sung, nothing more joyful heard, nothing thought of more pleasant). To know him, not indeed as perfectly, but in some degree in the way that Mary knew him, or St Joseph or St Peter.

2. Yes, those who knew Jesus like this, how they were drawn to him! how they watched, admired, appreciated, loved! how he was in their thoughts, even when not actually present! They knew how he loved them, and that they should ever come to be separated from him was the worst misfortune that could befall them. We must pray that we may love him also, love him, drawn by his human goodness, by the cords of Adam.

3. If we love a person we desire to be with him, we go after him, we long to be where he is, we long to share his lot, and so to be united to him in mind and heart. Love, we know, is very imitative, makes us lose all taste for what is distasteful to him we love, for what seems to put us in a different class or set from the one we follow. Our petition, then, must be to know, to love, to follow after.

LX.—The Incarnation (3)

1. The world as unredeemed, as working out the consequences of Adam's sin: mankind gradually spreading over, and covering the face of the earth, developing the physical and moral characteristics of the various races: a great diversity of persons, white, black, yellow, red, but all and each infected, the plague spot coming out in each, and spreading like a leprosy through the individual and through society: a great variety of conditions in life, and of personal gifts and talents, but all unprofitable and corrupt.

2. Their words reveal their thoughts, reveal the inner intellectual life of each. No doubt there is poetry, eloquence, history, most beautiful in its way, showing how marvellous are the powers of the human soul; sculpture, architecture, revealing the genius of the mind; but these things do not escape the universal corruption. The general undertone is impious, deceitful, impure, at least trivial, empty, idle, unloving.

3. Their actions are the outcome of a ceaseless collision of hostile interests; they strike, kill, oppress, torture. We know St Paul's description of the pagan world, even though receiving some portion, comparatively meagre though it be, of the fruits of Christ's redeeming toil: "*Being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness, full of envy, murder . . . whisperers, detractors . . . without affection, fidelity, mercy.*"

LXI.—The Incarnation (4)

1. From the earth, that seems so vast as we range through space and time, we lift our thoughts to heaven, from which it is so tiny, and yet so offensive withal. The three divine Persons, who dwell in light inaccessible, infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness; who have never brought about anything except in entire wisdom and love—no cloud, so to say, however small, can ever cross the calm and all-glorious expanse of their eternity, which is one with their very being.

2. What do they behold in that speck of material being, that seems to tremble on the ocean of their own immensity? Man created, elevated, fallen; their all-beneficent action crossed; their designs ruined by human liberty. A chaos of the devil's planning and making! *Behold man, whom we made in our own image and likeness, being in honour, he had no understanding, but is become as the brutes that perish. All have gone astray and become unprofitable together.*

3. What does the Almighty propose to do? Annihilate? Leave to their fate? Save by one stroke of power? If man is to be restored at all, this surely seems the likeliest way. But no: *Faciamus redemptionem* (Let us work out redemption). Let one of us undertake the work, become a member of this fallen, disgraced, degraded race, make full reparation for the outrage, the immeasurable mischief.

LXII.—The Incarnation (5)

1. And now, in virtue of the decree of Redemption, there is already, at least, one soul upon the earth on which the divine regard can rest with unalloyed delight, and with whom the three divine Persons will treat in the carrying out of their purpose. *Respexit humilitatem ancillae suae* (He regarded the humility of his handmaid). Mary, the only one of all the millions, who in view of what was to be asked of her, of what was to happen through her consent, was held up from falling into the defiled mass of humanity, was preserved through her Son's merits, immaculate, bright, full of grace.

2. Listen to the words spoken in the little chamber of that cottage home, the words chosen by God to be addressed to her by the angel, the words uttered by her in answer, under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit. "*Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee: fear not, Mary, thou shalt conceive and bear a son.*" "*How shall this be done, seeing that I know not man?*" "*The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.*" "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy Word.*"

3. *And the Word was made flesh.* In the Virgin's womb, in that bridal chamber, the divine takes the human to its embrace, both are united in the one Person, the second of the Trinity. Humility and Purity are the two charms: the King has put on his armour for the combat against pride and sensuality.

LXIII.—The Incarnation (6)

REFLECTIONS

The world as unredeemed, and so far as it rejects its Redeemer, has the devil for its chosen chief: *Princeps hujus mundi.* See *him* contemplating *his* work! It can never be set right, he thinks; God shall be irretrievably and eternally dishonoured, such is his miserable satisfaction. In spite of all their *natural* gifts, men are but as herds of swine, possessed by demons, rushing headlong into the abyss. The world has been cut adrift and is sailing to destruction. "*Because that when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. . . . Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves*" (Rom. i).

How unspeakably sad the destiny of every child born into the world! So fair, perhaps, in infancy, so bright in childhood, but what shall he become? The answer in general, if not in every case, is that he shall become a wreck, a lost soul, the sport of demons. Each man lies in the roadway, robbed, stripped, wounded, crippled, deprived of his treasure, barely able to crawl along, and even so, he crawls to a refuse heap, into a sewer, to lie there immortal, but corrupt.

LXIV.—The Incarnation (7)

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS

Sic Deus dilexit mundum. So did God love the world, as to give his only-begotten Son; so did he love *me*. His eyes rested on the chaos of my soul, as I should be, ignorant, proud, vicious, helpless, hopeless. That world he would conquer, and make of it a glorious kingdom, if only I would not reject his call. O admirable condescension! O inestimable love! O great sacrament of affection and goodness! He had compassion on the multitude, straying off like silly sheep into the desert; he would be their good Shepherd, going after each, ready to take it upon his shoulders, and carry it back to safety, to its true home.

Qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo, sed semetipsum exinanivit, formam servi accipiens (Though he was by nature God, yet he did not set great store on his equality with God; rather he emptied himself by taking the nature of a slave). What wonderful words!

Verebuntur filium meum (They will show reverence to my Son). But will they? or will they call for his blood?

He will come along our way, draw near, become a neighbour to each, bend lovingly over each, pour oil and wine into the wounds, lift him up, carry him in his arms, place him where all means of recovery and health can be found, stored up at his own expense. Is it possible that he will invite me to be his helpmate in his work of mercy, and then reward me for my help? What should I say to the Word Incarnate, to our Lady, to my Father in heaven?

LXV.—The Incarnation (8)

THE ANNUNCIATION

1. The Annunciation: his intention to come is announced, announced by the angel to the Virgin Mary; her consent is sought, her objections listened to and removed. She is to be his chief helpmate. To her is addressed the invitation of the King: Will you be with me in this enterprise?" O wonderful sweetness and gentleness of God towards his creatures! How good and sweet is thy spirit, O Lord, in all things! and because thou art Lord of all, thou makest thyself gracious to all. May I come to have you as brother, sister, friend, companion, everything!

2. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me.* Oh, to be prompt and diligent in carrying out to the full his holy will! *Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei, et custodiunt illud* (Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it). She opened the windows of heaven, and the fountains of the great deep, by her *fiat.* Yes, and what a flood of grace is pent up, waiting to rend the heavens, at our *fiat* also! at our: *be it done according to thy will,* at our self-surrender.

3. He is to take flesh, may we not say it? in each that will offer his whole self to become his. He is ready to take up the nature of each and make it his own. *Vivo jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus* (It is now not I that live, but Christ liveth in me). Our heart his kingdom indeed, but a living kingdom, a living reign of the Just One, a *cor tranquillum, ubi pax magna, et laetitia festiva* (A tranquil heart, wherein there is great peace, and festive joy).

THE NATIVITY

The first page gives the preludes, but may well be taken as a meditation: and then renewed before the remaining five.

Further meditations on the hidden life of Christ up to and including the finding of Jesus in the Temple by his parents are in place after this Exercise.

LXVI.—The Nativity (1)

1. In obedience to the edict by which all are to be enrolled in the place from which their family originates, Mary and Joseph have made the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They find the khan where the poorer folk put up for the night, full to overflowing, and take shelter in a stable, a cattle-shed that had a kind of cave for its background. There is a manger low down at one side, and Joseph makes such preparations as he can for Mary's comfort.

2. There within the confines of Bethlehem, as the prophets had foretold, is born the child, Mary's babe, and in the manger it is laid on the straw, the mother tenderly caring for it, and protecting it from the chill air, lifting it up to her breast, and again laying it gently down, wrapping the little body in swaddling clothes. After a time some shepherd lads come shyly in, and tell of the entrancing vision they had seen, and how they had heard the heavenly music and the angel's message.

3. O Jesus, may this sweet scene, of gentleness, lowliness, poverty, love, draw my heart to thee, may it fill me with affection for thee, teach me how good and kind thou art, make me long to keep close to thee always. Let me really care for nothing but to be a true friend and companion of thine, helping thee all I can, imitating thee all I can, fearing nothing so much as the loss of thy love and friendship.

LXVII.—The Nativity (2)

1. Those shepherds, watching and keeping the night watches over their flocks, quite unknown up to the present moment, and for ever after, just for this one hour entering so beautifully into the story. Simple, honest boys, doing their task in life, very pleasing to Jesus, who wants to have them near him. They knew something of the promises, were expecting the Saviour, but not, one may think, more that night than any other. There they sat about on the grass, in quiet silence, their sheep feeding around them or lying couched upon the turf.

2. But was the night, indeed, like any other? Was there not some special sweetness in the air? Was there not some special peace round about them? Did not their hearts burn within them as they lay watching in the silence? *Hodie nobis de coelo pax vera descendit, hodie per totum mundum melliflui facti sunt coeli.* The stars looked down from the blue vault above; all disturbing thoughts were hushed.

3. Suddenly a vision of entrancing beauty, the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. "*Fear not,*" said the Angel, "*I bring you tidings of great joy; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.*" Then the sign: "*You shall find the infant,*" etc., followed by the full chorus of the angelic host, singing: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.*"

LXVIII.—The Nativity (3)

1. The song was ended: the brightness faded away: the vision vanished. All is quiet as before on the hillside, the stars are shining, the sheep are all around. But the hearts of the shepherds are full of faith and confidence. God is with them, and will not slumber nor sleep; he will guard their sheep, while they follow the call. *Transeamus*, they say to one another, let us pass over the brow of the hill, and see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us.

2. Let us pass over to Bethlehem: ah! if only we would make that crossing over, leave for ever all vain and worldly things, and throw in our lot with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! Let us cross over and become once for all observers of silence, poverty, obedience, lowly toil. *Transeamus usque*: let us cross over right to the other side, not halting between two camps. What can the world do for us? Make the heart throb, and the head ache!

Transeamus et videamus. Yes, we do not leave the world behind, and turn the eyes from its glare for nothing, but that we may see the things that are true and lovely, see the things that God has prepared for those who give him their hearts. Let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed us. *Master, where dwellest thou? Come and see, he answers. Lord, that I may see!*

LXIX.—The Nativity (4)

1. They found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. There is Mary, how content and joyful in all that God has brought about, how happy to have the infant in her arms, how happy to see him lying in the manger: how glad to let the shepherds approach, and look at her babe, to show them the blessed fruit of her womb: yes, and eager to hear their story, and to learn still more of the sweet ways of God. *Quid vidistis, pastores? dicite, annuntiate nobis* (What have you seen, shepherd boys? Tell it; give us the news). Mary kept all in her heart.

2. And then St Joseph, seeing Mary taken up with the infant, tells the shepherds how they came to be in this cattle-shed on the hillside. There was no room in the khan. It was pitiful at the time to look round and then be turned away, and yet God has arranged all so lovingly. To be where there is only just room, how unpleasant that would have been! how painful! Better perhaps the poorest stable, than a place overrun with rude occupants, so crowded and unkind. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

3. But here, at all events, there is nothing to give pain to the divine Infant. Lying in the manger, where you would expect to find the food of the lower animals! And is he not to become our food, to lift us up from our degradation, and make us again healthy and holy in body and soul? *This day I would abide in thy house: come down, Zachaeus,* I would make my cradle in thy heart.

LXX.—The Nativity (5)

1. Here is the place prepared from eternity: its one recommendation, poverty; no *vana et mundana*, no vain and worldly things, no trace of worldly pomp, of sensual delight. There is nothing to interfere with Mary's joy. As we take a last look round the room we have prepared for a guest, so does God look round the stable and see that all is good, quite good.

2. There is a moment of deep silence, and then a tiny wail. *Vagit infans inter arcta Conditus praesepia, Membra pannis involuta Virgo mater alligat, Et Dei manus pedesque stricta cingit fascia.* (All within a lowly manger lo! a tender Babe he lies; See his gentle Virgin Mother lull to sleep his infant cries, While the limbs of God Incarnate round with swathing bands she ties.) The woman thou gavest me offered me the fruit, and I did eat. He gives his Mother, and his Mother gives him. With that love are we not encompassed? Pray for us sinners, O Mary; you have all you want; teach us to find what we want here, in this new paradise.

3. How sweet it all is! and yet there is the reverse of the picture, the seamless garment, all of a piece, all woven of suffering. It is all in view of the Cross. For those for whom he now sheds tears, he will later shed his blood. *Ipse lignum tunc notavit* (Even then he has marked out the wood of the tree). We must desire to follow our King, to make our lives of a piece. Let us begin with little things, being content to be unknown, subject, with little of our own. Where do we wish to be? With him? *Mecum?*

LXXI.—The Nativity (6)

1. The mystery is to be renewed daily: every day the God-man is to be born again, we may say, upon our altars, to be laid down, to be taken up, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of the accidents of bread and wine. He comes to remain always with us, as in the manger within the stable, that he may find at length a shelter, a welcome, under the appearance of a tiny morsel of food within our breasts, there to live and work. *O bone et dulcissime Jesu* (O good and most sweet Jesus).

2. *Hodie si vocem ejus audieritis.* Today if you shall hear his voice, that faint cry: the child wants air and room that he may live and act. I come, he says, to win your heart, to reign there; I take your flesh in order to impart to you my spirit, to make humility, subjection, simplicity dear to you. Will you not be of one heart with me? *Rex tuus venit mansuetus.* Your King comes to you in meekness; this is his strategy. If we cannot change the face of the world at large, we can change our own hearts, entreat him to make our hearts like his.

3. We must pray. *Jesu, splendor aeternae gloriae, apud te est os meum sine voce, et silentium meum loquitur tibi* (Jesus, splendour of eternal glory, my lips are at thy ear though they utter no word, and my silence is speaking to thy heart). Enlighten my blindness, dispel the darkness of the night, teach me the way of true prudence.

TWO STANDARDS

There is a preliminary consideration, and then the two preludes, which may be treated as in previous meditations.

LXXII.—Two Standards (1)

PRELIMINARY

1. Having made a certain number of "Contemplations" upon the infancy and hidden life of Christ, and this in the light of the Foundation-Exercise of the Kingdom, it may be supposed to have become evident to the Exercitant that the spirit of Christ is in direct opposition to the spirit of the world. Poverty, humiliation, trial, labour, obscurity mark every stage and scene of our Saviour's infancy, boyhood, and early manhood. We too, if we are to follow his lead, must oppose the worldly spirit, must go against sensuality, mere carnal love, and the love of the world.

2. But is this to be done merely in a quiet, hidden, unobtrusive way, or is it to be carried on, if not begun, in a stirring, open, even aggressive spirit? Must the follower of Christ, no less than the follower of the enemy of Christ, be an Apostle in some sense, and endeavour to make known by word and example the principles of Christ's kingdom, and bring over as many as possible to Christ's way of thinking and acting?

3. It is this that wants more explicit treatment, and the time has come to make a fuller exposition of Christ's plan of action. According to the idea of the Exercises, an "election" is soon to be made, where possible, of the actual exterior conditions and position in which we are to put into action the principles we have adopted. We want all possible light on Christ's intentions. The "election," remember, is one of exterior conditions, not of interior dispositions.

LXXIII.—Two Standards (2)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. Once more we must remind ourselves that the general *principles* laid down in "The Kingdom," and here in "Two Standards," are for all who wish to "signalise themselves in every way in the service of their King." The only subject for "Election" is the *form of life* in which these principles are to be carried out. If a person judges that Christ has selected him for the religious life, for example, then he too should so "elect."

2. What is the actual state of affairs, the ever-enduring story of human life, the history that really matters? It is this: Christ is ever desiring and calling men to range themselves on his side, under his standard, to uphold and fight for his principles, yes, and to do it in his way, though his way may take more than one exterior shape. An Apostle I must be, whatever be my call. The Devil, too, has a programme for human life which he wishes men to adopt and to uphold and to push to the front, to work for and strive to propagate.

3. We are invited to imagine two contrasted scenes: the one a scene of order, union, charity, a vast region crowned by the fair vision of the city of Peace, "*Beata pacis visio*." There is to be found Christ himself, the commander and leader of all the good. In opposition to this there is the region round Babylon, the city of confusion: a region where reigns disorder, strife, jealousy, and in that region is to be found Lucifer, domineering over the whole scene.

LXXIV.—Two Standards (3)

THE GENERAL FRUIT

1. The fruit to be asked for now especially, in my prayers, is an insight into the deceptive strategy, the fraudulent designs of the leader of the opposing forces, the chief enemy of Christ's Kingdom, that I may beware of them; also an intimate knowledge of the true way of life, in which there is no deceit or pretence; that which the true leader points out and shows forth. I ask, too, for grace to take him as my captain and my model in every way I can.

2. This meditation should leave no obscurity as to the general tactics to be followed; it must be determined between the soul and God, under what particular conditions, in what state of life, as we say, this general line is to be pursued. Let us see clearly what the enemy is about, and what our Lord is about; then, looking at our own personal qualifications and circumstances, we must judge how best to co-operate with the aims and designs of Christ.

3. It is a case of freedom of action, of being really alive, really least hampered, most useful and efficient in the great cause. If we are imagining we can serve Christ in some way of our own choosing, then of course we shall not be of much use. We want to be where he wills to place us. *Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando.* If we don't see the point, is it because we won't ?

LXXV.—Two Standards (4)

1. Each part of the Exercise has three divisions, corresponding roughly to persons, words, and actions. And first I am to represent to myself the chief enemy, the villainous head, as though seated, inspiring, directing the hostile forces—infusing, so to say, his own poisonous schemes into each and all; seated somewhere in that great plain round about Babylon, on a kind of huge scaffold, enveloped in fire and smoke, a horrid and terrible figure.

2. Unhappy indeed is he who allows himself to fall into his power; his only desire is to burn, stifle, and suffocate. He wants to terrorise, to tyrannise, and though his power is unsubstantial inasmuch as he cannot make captives of us against our will, he nevertheless can and will make the utmost of every chance we give him of exercising his cruelty.

3. Secondly, I am to consider the countless demons, whom he calls up and lets loose, some on one place, some on another, taking account even of every individual who is still free. His forces, then, are chiefly the invisible demons: they are everywhere, behind all that is tending to draw men away from Christ, and over to his own den. This is indeed a serious thought, especially for the half-hearted and for those who expose themselves to danger; my ruin, and short of that, my wounding and crippling is being pursued by these emissaries. This is what accounts for the ineffectualness of so many in Christ's cause.

LXXVI.—Two Standards (5)

1. I am next to consider the instructions which Satan gives to his emissaries and tools. He tells them to cast nets and fetters about men, whom after all he is pleased to regard as little better than silly animals. Do not waste your energies on those who are not even making an effort to follow Christ, or who think nothing about it. The question is, What is to be done with those who have some desire to be really of service to him?

2. Endeavour to allure them aside by worldly possessions, by riches, as they are called. Any temporal good that tends to increase their sense of their own importance will do; but the more it brings along with it the vain flattery and homage of the world, the better; the more naturally it leads on to vain-glory, the better. Vain-glory is fed by worldly honour, and so if that which you get them to be attached to, wins for them some worldly honour, that is the best kind of snare.

3. The object is to make them self-centred, little gods to themselves. So the true God will come to be regarded as more or less of an intruder, and there is no knowing to what degree of swollen pride they may be brought in this way—by degrees. The change is to be brought about gradually; there must be nothing downright sinful at first. Inordinate attachment, wanting to *get*, and wanting to *have*, and wanting to *be* something without any reference to the praise of God.

LXXVII.—Two Standards (6)

1. The second part in like manner has three points corresponding to those of the first part. And first, there is the person of Christ; there he is, standing in that wide region which is all around the city of Peace, in a place among the lowest, gracious, and most kind: "*Formam servi accipiens, et habitu inventus ut homo.*" The Son of man, and yet Son of God: *tanquam qui ministrat:* humble, pleasant, amiable. *Factus est in pace locus ejus.* What a contrast to the enemy!

2. He too calls around him ever so many followers. He is the true Lord of all; he keeps inviting many for special service in his cause, some for more special and more arduous service than others. He has his own gentle but effectual way of making known his intention and will in regard to each, where and how he wants them to take their part in promoting the glorious work.

3. They are to spread far and wide his teaching, his sacred message, among all sorts and conditions of men. The means to be adopted by each are various, but there is but one message of true life and peace and happiness for mankind. Everyone in his place and degree is to be the sweet odour of Christ; each is to recommend Christ's teaching, to make it attractive and sweet to all that he can reach and influence in any way.

LXXVIII.—Two Standards (7)

1. And what is the true and holy doctrine which they must know how to recommend, and to instil into others, even as he himself has done, so powerfully and yet so considerately by word and example? They must have that single desire to be a true help to all whom they can in any way influence; and this by leading them on first to the highest spiritual poverty—*i.e.*, to that disposition of soul by which they are detached in affection from all temporal possessions, wishing only to have and use them so far as it is for the praise of God.

2. To that disposition they must endeavour to lead all. Then they must lead them, lead the will, incline them, towards actual poverty, but not in the same absolute way, only drawing them to the desire that God may choose them for this, and to a readiness to embrace it at the least sign of God's will. There is a difference between not refusing God's invitation, and being eager for it to come that they may follow at once.

3. So, too, of the desire for reproaches and contempt. I must not actually choose them, and bring them down on myself without sufficient indication of God's will; but neither must I be merely ready to do so, if God so wills. I must be disposed towards them, as ordinary Christians are towards the not unlawful praise and esteem of men.

LXXIX.—Two Standards (8)

1. In the first part of this Exercise, we are told that there are three stages in the enemy's endeavour to hamper, and ultimately to entangle a man in his web, as the spider does the fly—viz., riches, honour, pride; and in the second part that there are three stages by which Christ, through his followers, endeavours to give a man full freedom for the most effectual service—viz., poverty, humiliations, humility.

2. As to the first three, we must understand, of course, riches, possessions pursued inordinately, and the vain honour of the world pursued and accepted inordinately—*i.e.*, without sincere reference to what God is asking of us for his own glory. In proportion to the inordinateness will be the development of pride, the swollen disease of self-importance. And it is hard and rare for one to have riches without wanting to have more, and without wanting to be made much of. They are a great danger, and easily tend to render a man useless—for his end.

3. Poverty, again, and humiliation must be approached or pursued in a Christian spirit—*i.e.*, out of a desire to enter into Christ's plan in himself embracing them, and so *ipso facto* recommending them to us as having a certain value for his purposes—*i.e.*, as *ceteris paribus*—making it easier for us to be quite pliable in God's hands, docile to his least direction—in other words, as leading to humility.

LXXX.—Two Standards (9)

1. Here, in marked contrast with "The Kingdom," there is explicit mention of a colloquy, *colloquium faciam*; and it is triple, first with our Lady, then with her divine Son, and lastly, with the Father, speaking with each in turn, and imploring the same favour from each. So far the instructions of the saint are clear enough. But it is less easy to form a perfectly clear idea of what we are to ask for.

2. I am to ask in general that I may be received under the standard of Christ; that I may no longer be left, as it were, in a kind of neutral, unemployed position, but that I may receive word from the King that he wants me to join his bodyguard, and close round the standard which marks the place where the chief fighting is to be done. And, of course, this means the highest perfection I can reach of spiritual poverty—*i.e.*, as complete detachment as possible from any temporal good.

3. But I am to go on to ask that I may have my share of actual poverty and of humiliation, the contempt of the world. I am to declare and encourage in myself this disposition, to regard these two things, painful as they are to nature, as privileges so far as they are part of that for which Christ chooses me out. It is really putting me more or less near to himself, though, of course, he can actually have me *as* near and *as* useful, without bringing this desire of mine into actual realisation. The desire to *have* and to *be* are the great obstacles to the spread of Christ's Kingdom.

LXXXI.—Two Standards (10)

Supposing I had always been faithful and generous in my service of Christ, what, I may ask, would have been the actual share in the Cross (to sum up the ideas of poverty and humiliation under this one word), what would have been the actual share of bodily and mental suffering (to extend the ideas of poverty and humiliations to their widest range), that our Lord would have called on me to endure in his cause? And so of the future, if henceforth I really try to be as generous with our Lord as I can, what will be the share of the Cross which, as a reward for my generosity, he will allow me to suffer in his service?

Well, I pray that I may not be wanting, that it may not be through fault of mine, that I am, as it were, passed over, and not called upon for my full part. This is, perhaps, as practical and tangible a way of putting the petition of this colloquy as we can easily reach. Our blessed Lord has a certain supplementary portion of his own Cross ready for our acceptance: the fulness of our supernatural life, the nearness of our union with him, the fruitfulness of our apostolate is connected with our taking up this share. Shall I take it? Shall I try to secure it? Would I have it to be even larger than it is? This share is *my decorations*, as a Christian knight. Shall I win them? Shall I even force him, as it were, to add to them? To decorate me more variously? For these decorations are a reward and a spur.

THREE TYPES OR CLASSES OF MEN

As in Two Standards, there is a preliminary consideration and two preludes, to be treated as before.

Further meditations on the public life of Christ up to the Last Supper are in place after this Exercise.

LXXXII.—Three Types or Classes of Men (1)

PRELIMINARY

1. However clear may be the conclusions of the last Exercise on *Two Standards*, when it comes to making an actual choice of the way each individual is to follow for carrying out most perfectly his determination to be a devoted follower of Christ, the will may be weighted by inordinate affections—*i.e.*, by a tendency to pursue one way rather than another from motives unconnected with the *end*, the praise of God. In order to be beforehand with this danger that threatens the "Election," and may even lead to there being no "Election" at all, this Exercise on Three Classes is proposed.

2. This Exercise has its application in regard, not only to a way or state of life, but to introducing any change in what has been hitherto my regular way of going on; a way that I have, perhaps, come to regard as *my* way, as though that were sufficient defence of it.

3. The will, alas! is often generous enough in theory, but when it comes to *doing anything*, it is extraordinary how it can decline to commit itself to any change. And yet is there no change wanted? Is my present way of going on so satisfactory, in view of what I have been considering, that it will serve as a final settlement? And if not, when is the change going to be made? Live as you would wish to die, for you will die as you live.

LXXXIII.—Three Types or Classes of Men (2)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. We are invited by St Ignatius to consider the case of three pairs of men. (Why pairs? No very satisfactory answer is forthcoming. It seems to give a certain actuality to the case, and enables us to represent them, if we choose, as discussing the situation together.) Each of these three pairs has acquired a large sum of money, has accepted it, and has settled down to a new way of living in accordance with this newly acquired wealth. All this has been done without reference to God's good pleasure, though of course without there being any sin. It has made a great change in their state of life, but it did not occur to any of them to put to themselves the question: Suppose I were living in Palestine at the time of Christ, and had asked him what he would wish me to do, what answer would he have given?

2. They all want to be saved—the *unum necessarium*; they even see that to cut off, as it were, any supply of grace is risky. They all want to find God in peace, to be on good terms with God, to have the comfort of feeling that they are not opposing his gracious designs in their regard. They are all conscious of a natural desire to keep the money and go on as they are, but have come to feel that this natural attachment may be, *is* necessarily something that makes the pure and simple choosing of God's will less easy than it would be, if this natural inclination could be entirely left out of count.

LXXXIV.—Three Types or Classes of Men (3)

GENERAL BACKGROUND (*continued*).

1. We are at a most solemn moment in the Exercises. Where do I stand? In the presence of God our Lord and of all his heavenly court, on purpose that I may come to desire nothing but what is more pleasing to his divine Majesty, and so be clear and keen in recognising it. Strangely enough, desire is put first here, and consequently the desire must be taken in general—a real, sincere desire for what is best, and so to come to see in particular what it is.

2. I must pray earnestly that I may make a good choice in regard to the conditions under which I am going to be a true follower of Christ: not necessarily that I may make this choice here and now, but that I may so make the Exercise as to make the best resolutions when the time comes.

3. "But he answered: fear not, for there are more with us than against us. And Eliseus prayed and said: Lord, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw. And behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots round about Eliseus" (4 Kings vi).

We want to examine and find out the true state of our will, so as to put it in the best state. Do we really want to be all for God? Do I really want to make my choice without bias, in the spirit of perfect humility?

LXXXV.—Three Types or Classes of Men (4)

1. What is the position of the first pair? They are conscious of the strong natural bias of their will towards keeping the acquired wealth, and of the danger they are in of being consequently more or less blind to the will of God, and practically unable to follow it, if it were to go counter to this bias. They also feel what a good thing it would be that God's will should be their only guide, and that there should be perfect harmony between themselves and God; and also how good to have that assurance of salvation and of obtaining all the graces for this end, which would ensue from this perfect conformity with God's will.

2. Nevertheless they remain under the weight of their inordinate attachment, and it really determines their course. They not only do not resolve actually to put the money away—this indeed may or may not be God's will—but they do nothing to render themselves really capable of an impartial judgement, and consequently have always the sense that they may be neglecting God's call, and at any rate are certain that they are not giving God his right place in their life.

3. So, whether it be God's will or not that they should give up the money, they certainly are not keeping it because it is God's will, but because they want to keep it. Nothing is done; there is a *deordinatio* running through their life to the end, which may quite possibly be their utter undoing.

LXXXVI.—Three Types or Classes of Men (5)

1. The second pair are also conscious of this decided natural bias towards keeping the money, and recognise also how such a bias easily leads to no real "election" being made, or one that is of little worth. They feel that it will not do to let such an attachment hinder them from doing God's will; but, on the other hand, to give up the money seems hardly to be entertained as a serious proposal. Is there no way of bringing it about that it should be God's will for them to keep the money?

2. This, then, is the problem: How to bring God's will round to what agrees with a man's natural bias. But are you ready to give it up, we ask, if this can't be? He answers: I hardly like to put such questions to myself; it's like asking whether I am ready to endure tortures, if God wills it.

3. We answer: No, it's not like that; there is no question at present of God asking for that, but here there is an actual state of things, in which you ought to find out and fulfil God's will. Well, he replies, it seems to me that I may take for granted that God wishes me to keep the money, if I devote a certain amount to charitable objects. But, we ask, how much will make it certain that God wants you to keep the rest? That's quibbling, he says: but is it not he who quibbles?

LXXXVII.—Three Types or Classes of Men (6)

1. Some reflections on the first two pairs. It has been said that the first pair does nothing to put itself right, the second does something, but something instead of what may be the will of God. The second is an advance on the first, in so far as it is prepared to do something in the direction of mortifying the inordinate affection. On the other hand, it seems to be more self-deluded than the first, and to treat God as if he were capable of being taken in also.

2. Neither pair knows that God wants the money to be renounced altogether, but they recognise that he *may* want this. The first continues simply in this state, the second acts as though, in case God did want the sacrifice, he might be put off with something short of this. The second seems in worse disposition than the first, inasmuch as it more explicitly admits that it is not willing to make the sacrifice; but, on the other hand, takes more pains to bring about a conjunction of doing God's will and at the same time retaining the money.

3. What has to be noticed especially is that it is not precisely the keeping of the money which they know to be inordinate, but their subjective dispositions. The Exercises all through make no claim to dictate what is to be done in regard to indifferent things; they only try to bring about the proper dispositions for choosing aright. This proper disposition is wanting here.

LXXXVIII.—Three Types or Classes of Men (7)

1. The third class is doubtless inclined to keep the money, but is determined to render this natural inclination, as far as possible, inoperative as far as influencing the will in its choice is concerned. How is this to be brought about? By regarding it rather as reason for making the sacrifice than otherwise, unless distinct and positive reasons can be found for deciding that God wishes the money to be retained. The natural inclination is to count for nothing as a reason for retaining it, rather as a reason for putting it entirely on one side, at least in thought, until the reasons that have to do with God's service and praise have decided the matter for or against.

2. This class may be said to consider the original acceptance of the money as invalid, and wish to revalidate it, only if it come to be clearly seen to be God's will. *Vires intendendo.* They brace themselves up in every way they can to resist the influence of the natural bias. We must remember that a natural affection for something which is not wrong in itself, is only inordinate so far as it influences an election. It is in itself no *motive* for or against, but, on the other hand, it is a *fact*, and facts have to be taken into account.

LXXXIX.—Three Types or Classes of Men (8)

1. The colloquy here is the same as for Two Standards. A note is added by St Ignatius to the effect that if we find in ourselves a decided natural aversion to actual poverty (to take one of the foremost subjects of "election"), and are conscious that we by no means find ourselves as ready to say *Yes* to it as to say *No*, it is very useful as a means for extinguishing such an inordinate affection—*i.e.*, for taking the inordinateness out of it, and rendering it powerless to influence our choice, to ask in our colloquies that our Lord God may choose us for that state, and to keep protesting that we want it, beg for it, provided it is to the greater service and praise of God.

2. This is one of the ways of using force, as it were, against the affection, praying down our repugnance as our Saviour did in his agony; endeavouring to bend our will into conformity with the divine will, going so counter to the unruly affection as to ask with the higher will that God may choose us for what is opposed to that affection. Thus we approach the "election" with a certain supernatural bias to the Cross; one has equivalently divested oneself, if not of one's money, at least of one's natural desire to keep it. And, of course, what is said of money applies to other objects of merely natural affection.

THREE WAYS OR KINDS OF HUMILITY

These four following numbers are rather of the nature of considerations than meditations, and are meant to be turned over in the mind while the Election, or the resolutions of a retreat, are being made.

XC.—Three Ways of Humility (1)

INTRODUCTORY

1. The object of this presentation of Humility under three ways or grades is, as the saint explains, to dispose the affections still more to the true doctrine of Christ—*i.e.*, to bring about that this teaching of Christ, as set out in Two Standards, may find us better and better disposed towards it, more ready to be attracted by it, as it keeps recurring to the mind. To the ordinary Christian this doctrine has but little attraction, seems harsh, unnatural, unpractical.

2. The three ways or grades mark three main stages; not as though a person must be precisely in one, but that his way of humility will be in the main after the manner of one of these three. Humility will attain its height of perfection in one who has the disposition described in the third way.

3. What is humility? It is certainly not easy to give a definition, and almost impossible, it would seem, to give one, that applies to the three kinds equally well. The following definition may serve: Humility is the virtue that inclines a man to make little account of himself, on account of his sense of the infinite greatness and all-importance of God. Moreover, this sense of God's all-importance is accompanied by a sense of his being ever present, and aware of all that we are doing.

XCI.—Three Ways of Humility (2)

1. The first way of humility is necessary for salvation—viz., that I make little account of myself, of my own will, of what I want to do, at least to the extent of submitting myself to the law of God in substantials, in what binds under grievous sin: so that it is my habitual attitude of will to reject any proposal of world, flesh, or devil which would involve transgression of any commandment, whether directly divine or directly human, which binds under mortal sin.

2. Evidently so far as I go no further than this, fear of God's punishments is the steadying influence. I recognise *God's importance* as a judge and avenger of crime, I recognise that I am ever in the presence of one who knows all my thoughts and actions, and to disregard whom in a serious way is to endanger my own salvation. In this way I take account of God, and practically acknowledge my helplessness before him.

3. This is not saying much, but, on the other hand, it is of vital importance. We should often ask in prayer that we may no more think of committing mortal sin than the average soldier thinks of running away in battle. He prefers to be shot. He is too conscious of the overwhelming strength of the war-machine to try thus to escape even certain death. Fear not him that can only kill the body.

XCII.—Three Ways of Humility (3)

1. The second way of humility marks quite a different stage. Now the sense of one's own insignificance before the infinite majesty of God is so complete that it has become monstrous ever to set aside God's good pleasure for our own, even though there is no question of sin at all; and *a fortiori* if there is question of sin however small.

2. In all choice, the only question is: What choice does God deign to wish me to make? As long as that is uncertain, *I* remain, as it were, uncertain, undecided; and if I have to choose, and yet cannot feel certain what God wants of me, then at least I know he wants me to choose, rather than abstain from choice; and I choose rather because he wishes me to, than because I want to choose one way rather than the other. This is carrying out the principle of the Foundation, neither more nor less: it is also the highest spiritual poverty.

3. In a certain sense nothing can go beyond this. The Exercises have no higher ultimate aim to put before the Exercitant, but they want him to employ the surest means for its attainment, the only means by which we can hope to attain it in any high degree. The love of God above all things is behind this attitude of will, but love under the aspect of self-abasement. *Tibi se cor meum totum subjicit* : true love being always from one point of view true humility.

XCIII.—Three Ways of Humility (4)

1. We now come to what is called the third way of humility, but it does not seem to be directly what is defined as humility. Its direct motive does not seem to be the motive of humility, and after all, what distinguishes a virtue is its motive, its formal motive, as it is called. Here the direct motive seems to be a strong attachment to Christ, to Christ as man, which inclines one to wish to resemble him even in the exterior conditions of poverty and humiliation which he chose for his lot. In so far as this personal attachment is cultivated with this motive in view, viz., to be more ready in practising the humility described as the second way, it may be said to belong to humility.

2. The conditions laid down for its exercise may present some difficulty, but the general disposition of will is pretty clear. I choose on the side of Christ's poverty and humiliation when I can do so without departing, as far as I can see, from God's good pleasure; and by so doing, I am really in the most perfect state for practising humility, for never failing to subordinate my will to God. I am using the very means the Incarnation was intended to supply for helping me not to be biassed by my natural leaning towards riches, comfort, and honour; and so, being ready for any call of God, I am in the most perfect way of humility.

THE LAST SUPPER

The preludes for this Exercise are given in the two following pages.

Further meditations on the Sacred Passion are in place after this Exercise.

XCIV.—The Last Supper (1)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. The outline of the story is given very succinctly in *The Exercises*: how Christ our Lord sent two of the disciples into the city to make ready the supper, and later on came himself with the rest. After having eaten the Paschal meal, he washed the feet of the twelve, gave them his most sacred Body and precious Blood, and spoke to them at some length, after Judas had gone out to conclude the bargain for betraying his Master. We can never be quite certain whether or not Judas was present at the institution of the blessed Eucharist and ordained a priest. In the order of the points that follow, we shall suppose that he was not present, but that our Lord by his words concerning the betrayal brought about his departure. There was no reason for him to suppose that anything further was to take place in the supper-room. We will also suppose that the words in St John's Gospel before chap. xiv are spoken before the reception of the Holy Eucharist, those in xv-xvii after.

2. The place is a well-appointed room, with the couches arranged around three sides of a large table. There must have been a little space between the couches, though not perhaps between our Lord and those next to him. The consecration of the bread and wine may have taken place at a table prepared apart.

XCV.—The Last Supper (2)

THE GENERAL FRUIT OF MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION

In his sacred Passion our blessed Saviour passes through a time of intense suffering, mental and bodily; and this suffering is brought about, not merely by what is taking place at the time itself, but it is put into a category of its own by reason of sin, of every man's sins, of my sins. It is the evil of sin that is the most bitter, crushing, heart-breaking element in all that is befalling his sacred Humanity; and so it is most true to say that my sins are the cause of his sufferings, they make his sufferings such as they are. His sufferings, we may say, are multiplied again and again by each load of sin that aggravates them.

And as I keep this before my mind, I pray that as a true penitent and friend of our Lord I may suffer with him as far as possible, feel with him, and so be strengthened in my resolve to give him the fullest support I can, and all the compensation I can: that I may never show want of gratitude, never show indifference by my way of living.

Passio Christi, conforta me (Passion of Christ, strengthen me). And the means it provides is the sentiment of compassion. After what I see Christ enduring for me, I can never play the coward again in carrying out the line of conduct I have determined on in his service. Compassion makes a man desirous never to forsake another, but to remain at his side.

XCVI.—The Last Supper (3)

1. The Paschal supper itself, the eating of the Paschal Lamb, is passed over in silence by the Evangelists; we cannot be quite sure if it took place at all, inasmuch as this supper may be an anticipation of that which is to be celebrated by the people generally the following evening. In any case, the true Lamb of God was there, soon to be truly eaten by those at table; the Lamb, all innocent, all pure, all gentle and meek, that takes upon himself, and takes away the sins of the world: Spare us, O Lord.

2. It would perhaps have been customary after the first part of the meal for those at table to rise and wash their hands. Our blessed Lord is beforehand, and is seen to rise, to take off his cloak, to gird a towel about him, to take a basin with water, and to set about washing the feet of the twelve. What a surprise for them! Our blessed Lord himself applies it to the need we have of being cleansed from those lesser stains which we contract in our daily path through life; and which he would fain remove before we receive him. *Amplius lava me.*

3. *Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet.* As for that, our Lord seems to say, *if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.* It is, indeed, too late to protest. He has washed us wholly long before he began to wash our feet. The washing away of our filth is the one great work he has made his own. We must allow him; we cannot accept the alternative—to have no part with him.

XCVII.—The Last Supper (4)

1. Not only is the lesson of purity from lesser faults stressed by our Lord, but also that of mutual service and charity. You call me master; if I, your master, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's. For I have given you an example: a special exhortation for the priest to hear with all patience and kindness the confessions of those who are preparing for Holy Communion: a work of great charity, and also at times of great weariness.

2. But every kind of lowly service is recommended, towards those especially with whom we are to kneel at the communion rails: fellow-guests of our one Lord and Master. There had been a strife among the Apostles who should be greatest and first. Was this action of our Lord the answer? Rather strive who shall be least and last. You shall be blessed indeed if you do these things: *do* them, *be* as one who serves, not merely propose to do or to be so.

3. Take away, O Lord, from our hearts, all suspicious, indignant, angry, quarrelsome thoughts, and whatever can injure charity or cool fraternal love (*Imit.*, iv 9). Yes, we must lay aside all resentful thoughts and feelings, as far as we can. How are we to be saved ourselves, except by boundless sweetness, gentleness, patience, persevering kindness? And all we do for another is a favour to Christ. Before he gives himself to us, he wishes to give us the opportunity of giving something to him.

XCVIII.—The Last Supper (5)

1. *In qua nocte tradebatur* (On the night in which he was being betrayed). The night of Christ's betrayal! A long night, is it not? Still enduring right through the world's history. *It was night*, says St John ominously, when he has recorded the departure of Judas from the supper-room to carry out his black purpose. *Everyone that doth evil hateth the light, that his works may not be reproved.*

2. *On the night in which he was betrayed.* Betrayed, given away, handed over to his enemies: but there is such a thing as being given away more figuratively, let down, as the saying is, by having our faults and weaknesses exposed by detraction. In this way we may have to share our leader's humiliation. The man of my peace, in whom I trusted, who lived with me, shared with me, who ate my bread, he lifteth up his heel against me. On the night in which he was given away—*prius in vitae ferculo se tradidit discipulis* (he first gave himself away to his disciples).

3. *One of you shall betray me.* Is it I, Lord? Certainly it has been in the past; shall it ever be so again? *He it is to whom I shall give the morsel.* This morsel was not the Sacrament, and after taking it, Judas went out. So we may believe that not even he made a bad Communion. Our Lord shielded him to the end, so that the rest thought that Judas had gone to give something to the poor! And me, has he not shielded my good name?

XCIX.—The Last Supper (6)

1. *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum* (The peace of the Lord be ever with you). Our blessed Lord had to restore peace to the troubled hearts of his disciples, before he would give them the Sacrament of peace: especially as, besides what he had said of the betrayal, he had predicted a dreadful thing about Peter. But in him there was no wrong intention at present. *Wilt thou lay down thy life for me?* Yes, you will it now, but *will* you when the occasion comes? Ah! Lord, who knows? Only thou. *A te numquam separari permittas.*

2. He assures them that though he is leaving them, it is to get ready a place for them, that they are to be united again one day, that meantime they know the way they are to go. Their prayers will always be heard, another, a new helper and advocate, will be given them, not less powerful and loving than himself, and more intimately present. This ever-present Comforter will bring to their minds all that he has taught them.

3. *My peace I give unto you*: *my* peace, not such as the world pretends to give. They must not be troubled or afraid. Rather they should be glad that he is going to the Father. The enemy, whom indeed he must meet, cannot really lay hold of him. He will come forth victorious from the encounter, having fulfilled his Father's commandment, which is only one of love, of love which is his only commandment to them.

C.—The Last Supper (7)

1. *He took bread, . . . and likewise the chalice.* The history of the bread: *unless the grain die, itself remaineth alone.* So it has passed through the period of obscurity and apparent death, its hidden life, appearing at length above-ground, exposed to storm and sunshine, ripened, reaped, sheaved, threshed, baked; and the grape, too, has been plucked, pressed, trodden, squeezed to the last drop. This is the true bread from Heaven; all has been leading up to this. He has found a way of giving his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink; of breaking through all barriers, and making his way into our very bodies. *O res mirabilis! manducat Dominum servus pauper et humilis.* Shall we allow any obstacle to keep us from belonging to him?

2. *Take ye and eat, . . . drink ye all of this.* But in very truth it is he who takes us into himself, we become his food and drink. Would indeed that I might become entirely united and absorbed into thee, my Lord, and might forget myself! *Gratias agens*, giving thanks, as though he were the recipient and not the giver. We give thee thanks, Almighty God.

3. *Domine, non sum dignus.* Lord, I am not worthy; yet at least, I am not intending to betray thee; I am not knowingly a traitor at heart. Then, he answers, I will come. *Ego veniam et curabo te*, I will come and cure thee. Do, dear Lord, say not the word only, but come thyself; I will prepare a place for thee as well as I can.

CI.—The Last Supper (8)

THE DISCOURSE

1. We may suppose that after the words of *John xiv* our Lord and his Apostles rose, and gathered round some side table prepared for the institution of the Holy Eucharist; and that after receiving Communion, the Apostles returned to their couches. Then it was, perhaps, that our Lord spoke the words recorded in *John xv-xvi*. May he speak to our hearts, too, after Communion, and may we be brought thereby more and more into true sympathy with him, and to the desire of assisting him more faithfully in all his designs.

2. What more appropriate subject after what had now just taken place than the allegory of the vine and the branches? You and I, says our blessed Lord, are one; I the vine-stock, you the branches, living by one life that passes from me to you. There is a continuity in the passing of this life from his heart into ours, every Communion being a heart-beat, a fresh impulse by which the living sap is driven from the vine-stock into the branches.

3. It was, indeed, by a special mystery that our Lord would purchase for us our supernatural life by shedding every drop of his blood. His blood, the life-giving principle of the bodily frame, flows into us as grace, which is the life-giving principle of our soul. Grace passes from him into us, especially by the Sacraments; and also whenever we use this life in action, it is strengthened, not used up, but augmented and intensified.

CII.—The Last Supper (9)

the discourse (*continued*)

1. The vine depends on its branches for its fruit. So our Lord leaves the fruit of his precious blood to come out in those who are united to him by grace; it is to be produced in us, our life bearing fruit that feeds and nourishes the Church. We, however, can impede the free flow of the sap, can put obstacles, block the channels, close more or less the valves: and thus the fruit, both direct in ourselves, and indirect in others, is diminished, is of inferior quality, to the Church's great loss.

2. Hence his earnest entreaty: *Abide in me* : not only by faith and hope and charity, but by endeavouring to fulfil all his injunctions, by entering into his sentiments and plans, by assimilation of his teaching (*You are clean by reason of the word I have spoken to you*). *Put on Christ.* We must desire to do nothing in which he cannot be acting with us and through us; accepting all those trials by which the divine husbandman purges, cleanses, invigorates the branch, that it may bear more and more fruit.

3. He places before us four distinct effects of this close abiding with him: (1) The special efficacy of our prayer; (2) the bringing forth of *much* fruit, fruit of virtue, of edification, of conversion ; (3) the becoming his disciples, fully, entirely, closely ; (4) the glory of his Father: *in this is my Father glorified.* How earnestly should we desire to *abide in him. Fac me tuis semper inhaerere mandatis* (Make me ever keep close to thy injunctions).

CIII.—The Last Supper (10)

the discourse (*continued*)

1. Having thus developed the allegory, our Lord comes, as it were, to the vital thing that the allegory stands for, the vital thing which this grace that makes us have one life with him, *is* in its very essence —viz., charity. So true is this that theologians discuss whether habitual grace and the virtue of charity are really distinct things at all. At any rate, they are inseparable; act contrary to the one, and you kill the other. The love of the Father has been lavished upon Christ as man, in the form of grace; this love is lavished upon us for his Father's sake, and our grace is to be lavished upon one another in the form of charity.

2. This was the sum total of the commandment he had received from his Father; this is the sum total of his commandment to us. *This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.* You are my friends, if you do the things I command you; we are his friends in proportion as we love one another.

3. And especially should we love his friends, those whom he has drawn closer to himself, those who are labouring in his cause, those chosen out by him to be his Apostles, doing all we can to help them. This love will be shown especially by example, by prayer, by removing all defects from our own lives, avoiding all that makes it less easy for others to love and serve him—that we may form one united company: *Pacificare et coadunare digneris* (Deign to bring us into perfect peace and unity).

CIV.—The Last Supper (II)

THE DISCOURSE (*continued*)

1. With Christ living and loving in us, with us too living to love each other in him, our strength is established in the face of a hostile world. If the world hate you, wonder not; for it has hated me. If you had been of the world, the world would have loved its own; but it hates you, because you are mine, my disciples, upholding my name, teaching my doctrine. It has hated me without cause; you for my name's sake. This is our comfort in whatever we have to bear from the world. But we must beware lest its dislike come from our being *un*like Christ.

2. And apart from what we may have to suffer from the world, we cannot become like Christ, without interior anguish. *A woman when she is in labour suffers, because her hour is come.* A man has to be born into the world, nay, another Christ has to be born; there must be labour, pain, pang. *Scalpri salubris ictibus, et tunsione plurima.* With many a stroke of mallet and chisel, noiseless perhaps and secret, is one more stone fashioned for the heavenly temple.

3. This, then, is what Holy Communion is to bring about: Life, love, union, strength. Love for one another, strength towards a hostile world. The world is always confronting us; we have always to be opposing it within and without. The three prayers before the *Domine, non sum dignus*, seem to ask for these fruits: union with one another, union with Christ, strength for soul and body.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The number that follows is preliminary, and the next gives the preludes (see p. 17).

Further meditations on the risen life of Christ are in place after this Exercise.

CV.—Christ's Resurrection (1)

1. In these mysteries of the Resurrection Jesus himself appears so beautiful, so bright, so lovable, so good, that it does not seem too much to pray and hope for, that we may begin to love him almost like the angels and saints of heaven, like our Lady herself, who love him for his very loveliness and glory and triumph: with a very *pure* love without thought of self, which will enhance greatly the merit of our service, with a very *joyous* love, that will make virtue even easy to us. *Amans volat, currit et laetatur.*

2. And the source of all this beauty and goodness is in the Divinity, which entirely penetrates and possesses the sacred Humanity, as the sun shines through some beautiful painted window, rendering it all bright and glorious. Not, indeed, that the effects of the Divinity are seen in all their dazzling brightness, but there is an ineffable charm that is felt in all his movements, words, and actions, which warms and illumines the souls of all whom he deigns to approach. *Tu facis cor tranquillum, et pacem magnam, laetitiamque festivam* (Thou givest a tranquil heart, great peace and festive joy).

3. He appears now in a new aspect; there is an entrancing sweetness, a wonderful delicacy, a delightful familiarity, which he has reserved, as it were, till now. He is so bent on bringing comfort, consolation, peace, joy to all; so persistent, as it were, to break through shyness, sullenness, fear, diffidence; so determined to make friends, to be friends with his chosen ones, with all who will have him. He is all heart.

1. The history for this contemplation is given succinctly in the Exercises: how after Christ had expired on the cross, and his body remained separated from the soul though always united to the Divinity, his soul, now in perfect bliss, likewise united to the Divinity, descended to limbo: there he brought a joyful release to the souls of the just, and in due time, coming to the sepulchre, and rising from the grave, he came in body and soul to bring consolation and joy to his blessed Mother.

2. The second prelude will be to pass in imagination to the place where the souls of the just have been awaiting this visit of their Redeemer, and thence to the sepulchre where lies the sacred Body, and so to the room where our blessed Lady is spending the morning of the Resurrection in prayer and earnest desire for the glory of her Son.

3. We are to ask for that which the previous meditations will have led us to desire intensely —viz., that as we have endeavoured to suffer with our Lord in the mysteries of his Passion, so now he may deign to allow us to rejoice with him, to find great joy in the thought of the great glory and happiness which fills his blessed soul and flows through his entire human nature. How consoling, indeed, to think that he who has suffered so greatly out of love for us is now and for ever to be filled with happiness! We pray to enter into the joy of our Lord. *Sis, Jesu, nostrum gaudium, Qui es futurus praemium, Sit nostra in te gloria In saeculorum saecula* (Here be our joy, dear Lord, Hereafter our reward; Jesus, our glory be Throughout eternity).

CVII.—Christ's Resurrection (3)

1. The souls of the just were not admitted into heaven—*i.e.*, to the intuitive vision of God—before our Saviour; but we may suppose that they found a wonderful happiness in the insight which was given to them into the ways of divine providence. And this insight surely gave them a longing to come into such relation and union with the Saviour as was possible for them. It is this longing that our Lord now hastens to satisfy. *Jesu bone, quando stabo ad videndum te?* O good Jesus, when shall I rise up to look on thee? When shall I contemplate the glory of thy kingdom? When shalt thou be all in all to me?

2. *Pastor noster, fons aquae vivae.* Our good Shepherd, like a spring of life-giving water, has made his presence felt in our midst; and at his approach the gloom is all lit up. For *he* is now made captive, who took captive the first man. Today our Saviour burst asunder the gates and bolts of death, and overthrew the might of the devil.

3. Enlighten me, O good Jesus, with the brightness of interior light, and cast out all darkness from the dwelling of my heart. I am miserable, and in a manner imprisoned and laden with fetters, till thou comfort me with the light of thy presence, and show me a joyful countenance. Behold, here I am, he answers; behold, I come to thee, for thou hast called me. And I said: Yes, Lord, I did call thee, I have been longing to enjoy thy presence, being prepared to throw all aside for the sake of having thee (*Imit.*, iii 21).

1. By the power of the divinity soul and body are reunited, and once more the Second Person of the Trinity is perfect man; but perfect in a higher sense than ever before, inasmuch as the infirmities of human nature to which he deigned to be subject are gone for ever. It is at the choice of the divine power to moderate or heighten the beauty and glory of his human nature; and what may not omnipotence effect in a nature that he has deigned to share along with us?

2. He has been preparing the soul of his most dear Mother for this happy moment, gradually comforting that sorrow-stricken heart, and gently leading her thoughts away from the anguish of the cross, to the peace and hope of the sepulchre, to the joy and blessedness of the risen life which is soon to commence. Who can imagine with what perfect clearness she is made aware of the truth of the resurrection, and how—*modo*, *supra sensum et modum*, *non omnibus noto*—in a way, above the limitations of sense, and known only to the very few, the sweet presence of Jesus brings rapture to her heart.

3. *Ecce adsum.* Lo! I am with you; the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed the fruit of thy womb. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, for the Lord is truly risen. *Sufficit si adhuc filius meus vivit.* It is enough that my Son lives again. Here, indeed, is a most pure, a most joyous love. My King and my God liveth, what more do I wish, or what more joyful thing can I desire? *Quid amplius volo, ant quid felicius desiderare possum* (*Imit.*).

A CONTEMPLATION FOR OBTAINING LOVE

The two first numbers are preliminary, the third gives the preludes, and the four points follow in turn.

CIX.—A Contemplation for Obtaining Love (1)

When it is said by St Ignatius that love ought to be placed rather in deeds than in words, the meaning is that although words, so far as they are sincere, are something, they are not the chief thing. And when it is said: *ought to be placed*, we are not to interpret these words of the essential nature of love, but rather of the way it lays itself out. The question is how love should lay itself out, or spend itself; and the answer is: not so much in words as in deeds. This observation is very pertinent to the matter in hand, because for the most part God is silent. No doubt we have his words in Holy Scripture, and especially in the record of the words of Christ. But he does not go on speaking, as an ordinary lover is wont to do: he allows his deeds to speak for him, and these are unceasing. The comparison is not between substantial deeds and empty words, but between deeds and words that are both genuine; and we are reminded that deeds are the more important. We are very apt to be impressed by reiterated expressions of love, and, strange to say, to overlook the language of deeds, as does King Lear in the famous tragedy. Even those who truly believe in God are often little accustomed to reflect upon his actions or to draw the obvious conclusions that flow from the consideration. The remark, then, is to prepare us to judge of God's love by his action.

CX.—A Contemplation for Obtaining Love (2)

The second observation made by the saint by way of introduction is this: love consists in a mutual interchange on either side, that is to say, in the lover giving to and sharing with the loved one that which he has or can attain, and conversely. But here again, though it says that love *consists* in this, we must not take the word too literally. Love *consists* in a union of will and desire, the *Unio Affectus*, as St Thomas says. When a person loves another, he regards that person as an *alter ego*, as the *better half* of himself—indeed, as indefinitely the larger part. Love always means some sort of desire to be one with the object loved: the love of mere desire aims at union by getting the object into oneself, the love of benevolence or friendship by putting self into the object of the love. Both aim at union, but in opposite ways.

St Ignatius, of course, is thinking of true love, of unselfish love, when he says that it consists—*i.e.*, realises itself—in giving, and each gift is an endeavour to identify self with the beloved. It is the endeavour to put all one has, and, as far as possible, all one is, into the loved one. The "giving" is an endeavour to secure union, but in the case of true love, always that the loved one may benefit. It is a mysterious thing is love, and I suppose one might say that it could not be made easily intelligible to one who had not experienced it.

CXI.—A Contemplation for Obtaining Love (3)

The first prelude recalls the one that is given in the Exercise of *Three Classes of Men.* In both we are invited to see how we are situated, with God our Lord and all the heavenly court looking down upon us and making intercession for us. They desire greatly to have us in their company, just as in the *Three Classes* they were most eager that we should be perfectly straight and sincere in making our election.

The second prelude has the usual double petition for intellect and will; that I may have an inward sense of God's love for me, of what he has done for me under this aspect—viz., as deeds of love. The effect of this inward sense should be that I begin to take notice of what he is doing, that I make an effort to show appreciation, to show that I *do* recognise what it all means, and this in ever-increasing degree, until it becomes as complete a recognition as I can make it. I want to act as becomes one who is the object of so much attention on God's part, and so to come to love and serve him in all things. Here it is not, as in the Foundation, a question of recognising my dependence, but my indebtedness; of recognising God's love, and so of being stirred to gratitude and to a desire, at least, to love in return, a desire which God, in his goodness, will satisfy by adding this gift to all his others, the gift of his love. *Da mihi tuum amorem et gratiam, nam haec mihi sufficit* (Give me thy love and thy grace, for this is enough for me).

CXII.—A Contemplation for Obtaining Love (4)

The first point: to call to mind God's benefits to me, those that are common to me and others, and those that are peculiar to me; dwelling on them, and trying to appreciate their value, with as great an estimation of God's goodness as I can. Notice, too, that these gifts and benefits are a participation of what he possesses himself. They are not the sort of things for which, as we say, he finds no use, but such as he finds it best to have himself. He seems to ask himself what he values most himself, and bestows these: *e.g.*, our powers of knowing and willing, and in the supernatural order, the truths which are most precious about himself.

Then, too, we must consider how his gifts are so many aids to enable us to come into possession of himself, so far as we are capable of this; so that he is evidently preparing the way for our being able to enjoy and possess himself. Evidently, then, God acts towards me, as one who loves me. Shall I say to him in return: "I accept all your gifts; but I want to get away from you to enjoy them"? Or shall I use them, as he evidently desires and intends, to secure more and more of him? That really is all he wants—that we should employ his gifts in the noblest way. His generosity to us should move us to carry out his plans with the utmost devotion. To give to God is merely to do his will with what we have. It is the Foundation again, but now from gratitude rather than duty.

CXIII.—A Contemplation for Obtaining Love (5)

The second point presents another aspect of God's gifts. He is behind them all. He does not make a present, and then, as one who has fulfilled a duty, go away; but he stays to keep on giving. This is just the lover's way. The mother does not give her child something to eat and then leave it to itself; but what she likes to do, is to feed the child morsel by morsel from her own hand, or from her own breast. God is like the mother, feeding us from his own breast, from his own hand. He is, as it were, working our faculties himself, and so far as we will allow him, he is directing them and applying them to himself, as being the object that will bring us most good and happiness.

St Ignatius says: Also making me a temple consecrated to him, created as I am to his own image and likeness. He seems here to be thinking of the interpretation by which *image and likeness* stand for the natural and supernatural faculties respectively, which are all given to enable me to possess God, to enshrine him in my soul, to make of my heart a tabernacle where he can be always present, but present in quite a special way, as being held and possessed supernaturally. Here in a very few words the saint seems to hint at all that belongs to mystical contemplation, in which there is a marvellous experience of God's presence in the soul.

CXIV.—A Contemplation for Obtaining Love (6)

Thirdly, I am to consider how God works and labours for me in all created things upon the face of the earth. Of course, such a way of speaking has to be qualified in some way; still, God *is* active, always doing, always concurring in all that is going on, and is therefore as one who perpetually toils for my sake. Just as he prepared the world for man, so he has prepared and arranged all that collection of things and circumstances that were to form the theatre of my free action. Suppose I were God's only intelligent creature, and I came to realise that all about me was his work, that he was ever busy in supplying my needs and arranging for my welfare, I should then feel how much God made of me, how much he cared for me, how evident was his love for me. I must remember that what would then be so patent, is no less true now. I must work with him, endeavour to realise his purpose, and this because love demands it. How far beyond what he is obliged to do are God's actions in my regard! How truly admirable are his works! It is true that they cost him nothing, though by the Incarnation he has succeeded in proving his love at the cost of labour and suffering to himself. But even his works, as God, are free and deliberate choices, made in order to prove his love. And not only is all without me his ever continuous work, but all within me too, in both the natural and supernatural order.

CXV.—A Contemplation for Obtaining Love (7)

The three preceding points help me to see what God is *to me*; this last is to help me to see what he is *in himself*. Infinitely good to me, infinitely good in himself. For see how all that I call good on earth, and all that God bestows on me, is ever coming down from above, is the overflow, we may say, of that infinite reservoir of good that God himself *is*. What is my little spark of intelligence but an emission of that infinitely bright light of God's own intelligence, a candle compared to the sun, and itself deriving its light therefrom? And so it is of all created good, coming down from him as rays from the sun, as streamlets from the ocean. What must God be in himself! The beauties of nature, the wonders of natural science, the loveliness of art in poetry, music, painting, architecture, eloquence, the marvels of grace, all these but dim reflections of God's own beauty, loveliness, grandeur, excellence.

Deus meus, et omnia (My God, and my all). The three first points show how truly he is my God; the last shows how he that is mine is everything. And yet, O God, thou art not wise, not beautiful, not powerful, not good; thou art none of these things, because thou art so much more than word or thought can express. What thou art I know not; but I love thee above all things, and this is enough for me.

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TITLE The Leading Meditations on the Spiritual Exercises

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